

THE  
HUMOUR OF ITALY

20



SELECTED AND TRANSLATED,  
WITH INTRODUCTION, BIO-  
GRAPHICAL INDEX, AND  
NOTES, BY A. WERNER: WITH  
FIFTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS  
BY ARTURO FALDI

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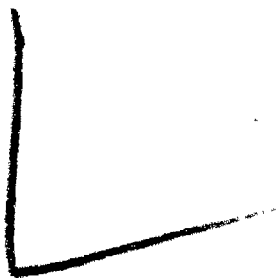
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## INTRODUCTION.

ITALIAN humour, says Mr. J. A. Symonds, died with Ariosto; and, in the face of such a declaration, any attempt to bring together a collection of specimens, some of which at any rate belong to a more recent date, would seem to savour of presumption. Yet, even at the risk of differing from such a recognised authority on Italian literature, we venture to think that a good deal has been produced since the age of Ariosto which may legitimately be defined as humour, though, for various reasons presently to be detailed, there are peculiar difficulties connected with its presentation in a foreign tongue.

It may as well be said at once that the professed humorist, the writer who is comic and nothing else, or, at any rate, whose main scope is to be funny, is all but unknown in modern Italian literature. Strictly speaking, he is perhaps a Germanic rather than a Latin product. The jokes in Italian comic and other papers are not, as a rule, overpoweringly amusing; and if we do come across a book which sets itself forth as *Umoristico*, the chances are that it turns out to be very tragical mirth indeed. But in novels and tales, even in essays and descriptions, which have no specially humorous intention, you often come across passages of a pure and spontaneous humour, inimitable in its own kind.

Italian humour may be said to fall into two great divisions, or rather—for it is impossible to draw hard and fast lines—to present two main characteristics, which are sometimes present together, sometimes separately. The first of these is what we may call the humour of *ludicrous incident*—a very elementary kind indeed, comprising what is usually known as “broad farce,” and finding its most rudimentary expression in horse-play and practical jokes of the Theodore Hook kind. The early stages of all literatures afford abundant examples of this; indeed, there

are some stories which appear to be so universally pleasing to human nature that they reappear, in various forms, all the world over, sometimes making their way into literature, sometimes surviving in oral tradition to the present day. Boccaccio and his predecessor, Franco Sacchetti, with numberless other writers of the "novelle" or short stories in prose, which very early became a striking feature in Italian literature, afford plenty of examples. Such are the tricks played on the unlucky Calandrino, the various "burle" (historical or not) ascribed to the painter Buffalmacco, and the story of the wicked Franciscan friar, who, after having been caught in his own trap and, as was confidently hoped, exposed before a whole congregation, had the wit to turn the situation to his own profit after all, and preached a most eloquent sermon on the incident. The same tendency is also seen in the "Morgante Maggiore" of Pulci, which in its turn gave birth to a large number of "heroico-comic" poems, most of them celebrating the adventures of some more or less fabulous hero, and also, it must be confessed, somewhat heavy and long-winded, the cumbrous *ottava rima* contributing not a little to this result.<sup>1</sup> Ariosto's great poem, of course, though having some points in common with these—he had two predecessors in his treatment of the Roland legend in epic form)—stands on an entirely different footing.

The other characteristic is difficult to define, and its best examples are almost impossible to render into another language. It consists in a peculiar, naïve drollery,—a something which reminds one of the Irish way of relating a story, only that it is quieter and more restrained,—a simplicity which seems almost unconscious of the ludicrous side of what it is describing, till we are undeceived by a sly hit here and there. This, though more developed in modern writers, exists side by side with the broader comic element in the older literature. There is a certain childlike quality about the Italian of the age of Dante that lends itself admirably to the expression of this trait.

<sup>1</sup> A tolerable specimen of the humour of the "Morgante" is to be found in Mr. J. A. Symonds' "Renaissance in Italy" (vol. iv., *Italian Literature*, p. 543). The passage translated contains the giant Morgante's confession of faith. He is a true believer (as he details at great length) in the creed of "fat capons boiled or maybe roasted."

The French are said to possess wit, but not humour; the Italians have humour, but not wit—or, at any rate, more of the former than the latter. True humour is never divorced from pathos; and it is usually allied with the power of seeing the poetry in common things. This one notices in many writers of the present day, such as Verga and Pratesi—whose works are full of humour, though not of a kind that appears to advantage in selections. It is shown in delicate elusive touches of description and narration, and provokes smiles—sometimes sad smiles—rather than laughter. Verga's humour is often grim and bitter—the tragedy of the hard lives he writes of has its farce too, but even that is a sad one. Something of this grimness comes out in his cynical sketch of the village priest, who was also farmer and money-lender—hated by his flock in one capacity, revered in the other, and dreaded in both.

Italy is so intimately associated with music and the drama, that, in such a selection as the following, one might expect to find a large number of quotations from comedies. This, however, is not the case. With hundreds of comedies to choose from, it is almost impossible to find anything adapted for quotation. It is quite true that quoting from a drama must always be more or less like handing round a brick as a sample of the house; but in Shakespeare, for instance, we can find abundance of single passages which will stand well enough by themselves to give a taste of his humorous quality. Had we been able to find in all the works of Goldoni or Gozzi, of Gherardi del Testa, Torelli, or Ferrari, a speech approaching—I do not say in degree, but in kind—any one of some dozen which one might pick out almost at random, on opening *Twelfth Night*, or *Henry IV.*, or *Much Ado About Nothing*, the task would have been much easier than it is. But in the best classical plays, such as Goldoni's, the interest is much more dependent on plot and situation than on character, and no short selection can either give an idea of the whole or be very amusing in itself. The liveliest bits of dialogue lose point apart from their context, and in any case are better adapted for acting than reading. The same might be said of any play worth the name, but it is perhaps peculiarly true of the eighteenth century "comedy of intrigue."

The comedy of the present day has not quite the same disadvantage. The stereotyped characters are done away with, and there is more play of individuality. But it will be noticed that the specimens given consist of one or more whole scenes, sometimes of considerable length—*i.e.*, there is the same deficiency, or nearly so, of quotable speeches. This, of course, is not a fault from the dramatic point of view; but it is embarrassing for the maker of selections.

Making all these allowances, one finds some of Torelli's and Ferrari's plays fairly amusing in the reading, whatever they may be when well acted; but even so the reflection is forced upon one that some of them are lamentable comedies indeed. It is not that they lack spirit and vivacity, but one is astonished at the subjects chosen. That any man should write a play called *The Duel*, in which the principal incident is a duel, which really does come off, and in which a man is killed, and then call it a comedy, passes one's comprehension. Not that the subject is made light of; there are comic characters and situations, it is true, but these are subsidiary, and the main treatment is dignified and even pathetic. Again, we have Torelli's *I Mariti*,—no tragedy could cause one acuter misery than this drama of ill-assorted marriages and slowly-tortured hearts. *La Verità*, by the same author, would be a bright and amusing play, were it not for the cynical bitterness of the main idea running through it. The hero, a simple, honest young fellow from the country, gets into trouble by his outspokenness all through the first act or two; then, having found out that honesty does not pay, he takes to lying and flattery, and gets on in the world accordingly. Another example of the same tendency is Ferrari's *Suicidio*.

It is true that the word *commedia* in Italian does not always denote what we mean by a comedy (as witness the *Divina Commedia*), but that the distinction is to some extent observed in the modern drama is proved by the fact that some plays are designated *commedia*, others "dramma" or "tragedia."

There is a peculiarly national development of the drama in Italy, which demands a word or two to itself. I mean the *Commedia dell'Arte*, so fully and ably discussed by Mr. Symonds in the introduction to his recent translation of Gozzi's

*Memoirs.* Briefly speaking, this is a play of which the author furnishes only the outline—the plot, the division into acts and scenes, and a certain number of stage directions—the words being wholly or partly extemporised by the actors. In fact, the dialogue of these plays consisted chiefly of “gag,” though the extent to which this was the case appears to have varied, the playwright sometimes supplying hints for every speech, and even entire speeches,—sometimes only indicating the general line taken during the scene. The *Commedia dell’ Arte* was immensely popular during the first half of the eighteenth century; but then declined, owing to the influence of Goldoni, who introduced the *Comedy of Manners*, in which he largely followed French models. It is curious that Molière, who thus, one might say, was indirectly instrumental in superseding the *Commedia dell’ Arte*, should have received his first impulse from this very form of the drama, as brought into France by Italian companies.

Most plays of this description partook rather of the character of farce than of legitimate comedy. The principal personages—Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon, Coviello, Scaramouch, etc.—who make their appearance in every one, had certain fixed traditional costumes and masks, which were never departed from. The familiar figure of Punch, which has been so completely naturalised as to appear one of the most English of all English institutions, was handed down through many generations of Italian players before he reached our shores. As “Pulcinella” or “Polecenella” he is a typically Neapolitan figure; while Stenterello, another favourite mask, is as typically Tuscan. The name is supposed to be derived from “Stentare” (to be in great want)—the Tuscans, and more especially the Florentines, being famous throughout the Peninsula for economy—not to say meanness—which is a prominent feature in Stenterello’s character.

The *Commedia dell’ Arte* was eminently suited to the Italian national character, with its fluent eloquence and spontaneous drollery, so much of which depends on facial and vocal expression, on ready repartee and apt allusion, that it loses enormously on being written down.

The *scenario*, or outline of the acts and scenes, while it kept



the action in a definite shape and prevented over-much diffuseness, allowed the most unlimited scope for both the tendencies already described, though perhaps that towards broad farce and practical joking is the most prominent. Indeed, the coarseness into which it has ever been apt to degenerate is throughout unpleasantly prominent. Symonds—surely not a very squeamish critic—speaks of these farces in terms to make one think that the oblivion into which they have fallen is not a matter for regret. Moreover, while the coarseness of the story (independent of what might be incidentally introduced into the dialogue) forms part of the groundwork of the play, and would thus be perpetuated, the subtler play of humour is much more easily lost. The numerous comedies and farces of Francesco Cerlone, if not actually coming within the category of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, may be regarded as a development of it. They are real plays, with the speeches written out in full, and usually a plot of the kind found in what is called the "comedy of intrigue," while the characters are bound by no fixed rules. But there is always a more or less farcical underplot, in which some of the above-mentioned stereotyped personages figure, Pulcinella and Columbine being the principal ones. The greater part of these scenes is in the Neapolitan dialect, traditionally assigned to Pulcinella throughout the *Commedia dell'Arte*. Each of the "masks," by-the-bye, speaks some provincial dialect; and a great deal of humour appears to be got out of the device of bringing two or more speakers of different dialects on the stage at once. Molière has to a certain extent done the same thing, notably in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

Further information concerning these masks may be found in that delightful book, Story's *Roba di Roma*.

Another development of the Italian drama which must not be passed over without notice is the comic opera, which came into fashion during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Casti (the author of a somewhat dreary satire, "Gli Animali Parlanti," the sonnet-cycle, "I Tre Giuli," a good idea worked to death, and some unspeakably vile *Novelle*) excelled in this line, producing, among others, *La Grotta di Trofonio* and *Il Re Teodoro*, which are something like Gilbert and Sullivan's librettos in their tripping measures and rattling fun. Other

comic operas of the same period are *Il Paese di Cuccagna*, by Carlo Goldoni, and *L'Opera Seria* by Ramieri Calsabigi, a parody on the serious operas which were just then becoming fashionable. The poet and the composer are introduced respectively as Don Delirio and Don Sospiro ("Sighing"), and the manager asks them in turn, "What the devil is the good of so many sentences just at the crisis of passion?" and "Who can stand all those cadences in the midst of an *aria* full of action?" More modern works of this kind have been written by Pananti, Gherardini, Lorenzo del Ponte, and Angelo Anelli (died 1820).

"The Italians are good actors," says Story, "and entirely without self-consciousness and inflated affectation. . . . They are simple and natural. Their life, which is public, out of doors, and gregarious, gives them confidence, and by nature they are free from self-consciousness. The same absence of artificiality that marks their manners in life is visible on the stage. One should, however, understand the Italian character, and know their habits and peculiarities in order fitly to relish their acting. It is as different from the French acting as their character is different from that of the French. . . . In character-parts, comedy and farce, they are admirable; and out of Italy the real *buffo* does not exist. Their impersonations, without overstepping the truth of natural oddity, exhibit a humour of character and a general susceptibility to the absurd which could hardly be excelled. Their farce is not dry, witty, and sarcastic like the French, but rich, humorous, and droll. The *primo comico*, who is always rushing from one scrape to another, is so full of chatter and blunder, ingenuity and good nature, that it is impossible not to laugh with him and wish him well; while the heavy father or irascible old uncle, in the midst of the most grotesque and absurdly natural imitation, without altering in the least his character, will often move you by sudden touches of pathos when you are least prepared. The old man is particularly well represented on the Italian stage. In moments of excitement and emotion, despite his red bandanna handkerchief, his spasmodic taking of snuff, and his blowing of his nose, all of which are given with a truth which, at first, to a stranger, trenches not slightly on the bounds of the ludicrous—look out—by an unexpected and exquisitely natural

turn he will bring the tears at once into your eyes. I know nothing so like this suddenness and unexpectedness of pathos in Italian acting as certain passages in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which catch you quite unprepared, and, expecting to laugh, you find yourself crying.

"If one would see the characteristic theatres of the *basso popolo*, and study their manners, he should go to the Teatro Emiliano in the Piazza Navona, or the Fico, so called from the street in which it is situated. At the former the acting is by respectable puppets; at the latter the plays are performed by actors or *personaggi*, as they are called. The love for the acting of *burattini*, or puppets, is universal among the lower classes throughout Italy, and in some cities, especially Genoa, no pains are spared in their costume, construction, and movement to render them life-like. They are made of wood, are generally from two to three feet in height, with very large heads and supernatural, glaring eyes that never wink, and are clad in all the splendour of tinsel, velvet, and steel. Their joints are so flexible that the least weight or strain upon them effects a dislocation, and they are moved by wires attached to their heads and extremities. Though the largest are only about half the height of a man, yet, as the stage and all the appointments and scenery are upon the same scale of proportion, the eye is soon deceived, and accepts them as if life-size. But if by accident a hand or arm of one of the wire-pullers appears from behind the scenes, or descends below the hangings, it startles you by its portentous size, and the audience in the stage-boxes, instead of reducing the *burattini* to Lilliputians by contrast, as they lean forward, become themselves Brobdingnagians, with elephantine heads and hands.

"Do not allow yourself to suppose that there is anything ludicrous to the audience in the performances of these wooden *burattini*. Nothing, on the contrary, is more serious. No human being could be so serious. Their countenances are solemn as death, and more unchanging than the face of a clock. Their terrible gravity when, with drooping heads and collapsed arms, they fix on you their great goggle eyes, is at times ghastly. They never descend into the regions of conscious farce. The plays they perform are mostly heroic, romantic,

and historical. . . . The audience listen with grave and profound interest. To them the actors are not *fantoccini*, but heroes. Their inflated and extravagant discourse is simply grand and noble. They are the mighty *x* which represents the unknown quantity of boasting which potentially exists in the bosom of every one. Do not laugh when you enter, or the general look of surprise and annoyance will at once recall you to the proprieties of the occasion. You might as well laugh in a church. . . .

"At every theatre there are two performances, or *camerate*, every evening, one commencing at *Ave Maria* (sunset), the other at ten o'clock. We arrived at the Teatro Emiliano just too late for the first, as we learned at the ticket-office. 'What is that great noise of drums inside?' asked we. '*Battaglie*,' said the ticket-seller. 'Shall we see a battle in the next piece?' '*Eh, sempre battaglie!*' (Always battles) was the reproving answer. . . .

"The bill pasted outside informed us that the *burattini* were to play to-night 'The *grandiose* opera, entitled, *Belisarius, or the Adventures of Orestes, Ersilia, Falsierone, Selenguerro, and the terrible Hunchback*.' In the names themselves there was a sound of horror and fear."

The writer goes on to describe the play in a very humorous fashion, but as the humour is only apparent from the spectator's point of view, and does not belong to the work represented, we must not digress so far as to quote it at full length. The conclusion, however, may be given. ". . . Suffice it to say that there was the 'Serpent-man,' ending in a long green tail, and a terrible giant with a negro head and pock-marked face, each of which was a *Deus ex machina*, descending at opportune moments to assist one or the other side, the *uomo serpente* on one occasion crushing a warrior who was engaged in an encounter with Ersilia, by flinging a great tower on him. What Belisario had to do with this *grandiosa opera*, besides giving it his name, I did not plainly see, as he never made his appearance on the stage. However, the audience seemed greatly delighted with the performance. They ate voraciously of *bruscolini* (pumpkin seeds, salted and cooked in a furnace, of which the Romans are very fond) and cakes, partook largely of

lemonade, and when I left the stage was strewn with *cornetti*, or paper horns, which they had emptied of their seeds."<sup>1</sup>

The use of dialect in the comic drama has been already adverted to. At the present day "dialect stories" are almost as popular in Italy as they have been, for some time past, in the American magazines. The Neapolitan dialect, so closely connected with Pulcinella, has become as much a stock property of the Italian comic muse, as the brogue of the stage Irishman is of the English. A paper, entirely in this dialect, entitled, "Lo Cuorpo de Napole e lo Sebbeto," was published for some time at Naples, in the early sixties; but its humour was exclusively political, and of a local and temporary character. The Sicilian dialect has been brought into notice by Verga (whose actual use of it, however, is sparing), Navarro della Miraglia, Capuana, and other writers. Goldoni used the Venetian throughout some of his best comedies (*Le Baruffe Chiozzote*, for instance), but it seems to have fallen comparatively out of favour of late years. D'Annunzio, in his *San Pantaleone*, and other stories, has made very effective use of the dialect spoken along the Adriatic coast, about Pescara and Ortona, which is a kind of cross between the Venetian and Neapolitan. In Piedmont there appears to be a mass of popular literature in the (to outsiders) singularly unattractive *patois* which was so dear to Cavour and Victor Emmanuel.

Among the cities of the Peninsula, Milan and Florence enjoy a pre-eminent reputation for humour. The Florentines of the Middle Ages were famous for their biting wit and satirical speeches, their "motti" and "frizzi." Franco Sacchetti and Luigi Pulci were Florentines, and Boccaccio was next door to one, being a native of Certaldo. Even Dante, though the last man in the world of whom one would expect anything in the way of humorous utterance, was not without a certain grim facetiousness of his own, as when he turned on the jeering courtiers at Verona with a bitter play on the name of *Can Grande*, or annihilated the harmless bore in Santa Maria Novella, with his "Or bene; o lionfante, non mi dar noia." Giusti, whose poems are described as "rather satirical than humorous" (though, as satire is one department of humour, it is rather

<sup>1</sup> *Roba di Roma*, i. pp. 202, 203, 269-279.

difficult to see the point of the definition), is in many respects a typical Florentine, though not one by birth, his native place being Monsummano, in the Lucca district. His poems exhibit a singular union of caustic sarcasm and irony, fierce earnestness and merry, rattling *disinvoltura*--light-hearted Tuscan laughter. He wrote chiefly on political subjects, and never did political poet have worthier themes for his verse. The times in which he lived were sufficient to call forth any amount of *sæva indignatio*, and if the bitterness sometimes ran so high as to leave no heart for mirth at the pitiful incongruity of human affairs (as in *A noi, larve d'Italia*), no one who cares for freedom, or to whom the name of Italy is dear, can blame him. Irish hearts can understand the note of deep personal pain that breaks out in "King Log," or "Weathercock's Toast," or the scathing scorn of "Gingillino";--we have nothing quite like it in English literature. The cause is wanting. We see the same thing in looking over a collection of Italian political caricatures extending over the last thirty or forty years. Some of the cartoons in *Lo Spirito Folletto* are equal (I am not speaking of minor technical details, of which I am no judge) to the best of Tenniel's, and the ideal figure of Italy is of rare beauty; but they do not give us what, as a rule, we are accustomed to look for in a cartoon. Now and then, in a serious mood, the artist just named gives us a noble drawing, which is in no sense a caricature; but no work of his causes--nor is it in nature that it should do so--the thrill, the *serrement de cœur*, we feel before the Aspromonte drawing, with its mournful legend, "Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow;" or that haunting picture of the "Italia Irredenta" riots of 1882, where Italy looks on the dead body of young Oberdank. We have not fought against hopeless odds for a suffering country.

But in spite of this earnestness (which is usually said to be fatal to a sense of humour), the Tuscan love of fun was always bubbling up in Giusti. His letters, in which he was continually falling into the racy idioms of his native hill-country, are full of it; and some of his poems are purely playful, without political or satiric intention--or, if satiric, only in a kindly spirit. Such is the poem of "Love and a Quiet Life," from which we have given an extract. There seems to be no English version of the

best of Giusti's works, and these offer peculiar difficulties to the translator. I have not ventured to lay hands on the "Brindisi di Girella"—a process which could only result in spoiling that inimitable poem—and have contented myself with the excellent renderings of "L'Amor Pacifico," and some stanzas from "Gingillino," contributed some thirty years ago to the *Cornhill Magazine* by an anonymous writer.

Tuscan rural life has been admirably painted of late years by, among others, Mario Pratesi and Renato Fucini, both writers of considerable graphic power and a certain "pawky" humour, though they seem to prefer tragedy to comedy. The latter's sketch of a day in a Tuscan country-house has been included in the present collection.

So much for Florence and Tuscany. Milan is famous in Italy for various things—for its Duomo and the singing at La Scala—for the gallant fight for liberty during the Five Days in '48—and for the mysterious delicacies known as *polpette* and *panettone*. But besides all these things, the Milanese are noted for a love of jokes and laughter, which they endeavoured heroically to suppress in the days of the Austrian dominion. They possess a dialect which seems as though it were intended for the comic stage, and lends itself excellently well to Aristophanic wit; and they have had a dialect-poet of some note—Giacomo Porta, the friend of Grossi and Giusti. Giusti had a great sense of the humorous capabilities of the Milanese dialect, and quoted verses in it (or, more probably, improvised quotations) in letters to his Milanese friends. Unfortunately Porta's poems are so strictly local, and lose so much by translation, that none of them have been found available for this book.

As a rule, the prose specimens of Italian humour have been more satisfactory (as far as the present work is concerned) than the poetical, for two reasons—first, the latter are more difficult to translate with any degree of point and spirit; and secondly, whether from the choice of metre or other causes, they are apt to become long-winded, if not heavy. The favourite measure for humorous poems, which cannot exactly be described as satires, is a six-line stanza, like that of Horace Smith's "Address to the Mummy"; in fact, the *ottava rima* stanza, docked of two lines.



Now, a division into stanzas is not, as a rule, favourable to rapid or spirited narration, and the longer the stanza the greater the difficulty. Unless the thought exactly fits the limit, it must be either abruptly contracted to bring it within the compass of the stanza, or expanded by feeble paraphrase and repetition; otherwise the *enjambements* resulting from the carrying on of a sentence from one stanza into another are apt to be awkward and obscure, unless very skilfully managed. Pananti, in his "Poeta di Teatro" (from which I have given a quotation), is very happy in this stanza; the measure flows easily, and the poem is not, in the original, too diffuse, the accumulation of trivial details having a naïvely ludicrous effect, which is lost to some extent in English. Pananti, by-the-bye, was a Tuscan, as was also the genial physician, Redi, whose dithyramb in praise of the wine of Montepulciano (he also wrote a great number of pleasant letters, and some papers on natural history, which show him to have been an accurate observer as well as an enthusiastic lover of nature) has been spiritedly translated by Leigh Hunt. So, too, was another doctor, Guadagnoli, whose collection of *Poesie giocose* contains some good things, but none in a sufficiently concentrated form for quotation.

In speaking of the humorous literature of Italy, we must not forget to notice the English influence which made itself so strongly felt during the eighteenth century. Swift, Addison, and Sterne found not only eager readers, but imitators. Giuseppe Baretti, the friend of Johnson, who, after a prolonged residence in London, returned to Italy for a few years, probably did something towards popularising the language and literature of his adopted country. Count Gasparo Gozzi (elder brother to Carlo Gozzi, of the *Memorie* and the *Fiabe*) founded and carried on for some time, at Venice, a journal called *L'Osservatore*, avowedly on the model of the *Spectator*; and though he was no servile imitator, his writings have an unmistakable Addisonian flavour. Sterne's influence was, perhaps, more widely felt than any other. Ugo Foscolo probably came under it when writing *Didimo Chierico*; and the frequent allusions to the *Sentimental Journey* in Italian writers prove it to have been widely read. Leopardi's intensely original individuality owed little to any writer; yet I cannot help thinking that he may have found



Swift, to whom he was in some respects akin, both suggestive and stimulating. Certainly, the masterly dialogues exhibit a bitter saturnine humour very like Swift's misanthropic irony, though more subtle and refined, and rendered still more striking by that innocent-seeming *naïveté* of expression which is so peculiarly Italian. The dialogue between the "First Hour and the Sun," now translated, is one of the best; but "The Wager of Prometheus" is exceedingly fine, though too long to quote entire, and difficult to select from. I have examined the translation of some of these dialogues by Mr. Charles Edwards in Trübner's *Philosophical Library*, but, after consideration, found myself unable to make use of them. Apart from a few minor inaccuracies, which could easily have been corrected, it was evident that the translator had his mind fixed on Leopardi's philosophy, and the peculiar humorous quality of the dialogues had almost disappeared in his version. The bull, which the Edgeworths laboured so hard to prove not indigenous to Ireland, or at least not peculiar to the Green Isle, flourishes vigorously in Italy. It naturally would be of frequent occurrence among a quick-witted people, ready of speech, who, in their haste to reach the salient points which have struck their imagination, omit to express the connecting links, and so make that absurd which is perfectly clear to their own minds. Into the wilderness of definition we will not enter; but there appear to be two principal kinds of bulls,—one in which the man's idea is sensible enough, though it appears nonsense to others, because of his excessive brevity, as in "He sent me to the devil and I came straight to your honour;" and another in which it is in itself nonsense, because he has overlooked one essential condition. Thus, when the blind man in Pratesi's *Detto Fato* is eagerly asseverating something, he exclaims, "May I become blind if . . . !" Castiglione records another bull of this kind (it will be found on page 28), which will at once be recognised as an old and familiar friend; and others will be met with in the course of the volume.

It must be confessed that Italian humour is often of the Aristophanic order, not merely in that (as has been already hinted) a great deal of it is concerned with topics usually (among us) omitted from polite conversation, but also in the more

than free-and-easy way in which the Unseen is frequently dealt with. The worship of the saints—whatever may be said to the contrary—stands much upon the same footing among the ignorant and superstitious peasantry of Southern Italy (it is not so true of the Tuscans) as the polytheism of ancient Greece and Rome. And if familiarity bred contempt in the case of Aristophanes (it may not have been so—and we dare not say, in the face of learned commentators, that it was—but it certainly looks like it), like causes have produced like effects in Naples and Sicily. The Neapolitan lazzaroni has scant respect for San Gennaro, when the latter shows no signs of acceding to his wishes, but calls him *animale* and *canaglia*, and worse names than that. Capuana has an exceedingly characteristic sketch, entitled “Rottura col Patriarca,” in which a gentleman, who considers himself badly treated by St. Joseph, the patron of married couples (being disappointed in his hopes of an heir, besides numerous other misfortunes), declares that he has formally broken with that saint, and throws his picture out of window. His confessor remonstrates with him for his language on the subject, which is, to say the least, unparliamentary; but the gentleman replies, “As a patriarch, and the husband of the Virgin, I am willing to accord him all due respect, but . . . in short, he has behaved very shabbily, and I will have no more to do with him.”

This suggests the subject of ejaculations, oaths, and imprecations, of which the Italians have an infinite variety, and as some of the most characteristic occur untranslated in the following selections, a few words of explanation may not be out of place. The subject has been treated so well by Story, that I cannot forbear quoting him once more, especially as the passage throws curious side-lights on some aspects of the national character.

“. . . By the way, a curious feature in the oaths of the Italians may be remarked. ‘*Dio mio!*’ is merely an exclamation of sudden surprise or wonder; ‘*Madonna mia,*’ of pity and sorrow; and ‘*Per Cristo,*’ of hatred and revenge. It is in the name of Christ (and not of God, as with us) that imprecations, curses, and maledictions are invoked by an Italian upon persons and things which have excited his rage; and the

reason is very simple. Christ is to him the judge and avenger of all, and so represented in every picture he sees, from Orcagna's and Michael Angelo's 'Last Judgment' down, while the Eternal Father is a peaceful old figure bending over him as he hurls down denunciations on the damned. Christ has but two aspects for him—one as the *bambino*, or baby, for which he cares nothing, and one as the terrible avenger of all. The oath comes from the Middle Ages, when Christ was looked upon mostly in the latter aspect; but in modern days, He is regarded as the innocent babe upon the lap of the Madonna. Generally, the oaths of the Italians are pleasant, and they have not forgotten some which their ancient ancestors used. They still swear by the loveliest of the heathen deities, the god of genial nature, Bacchus; and among their commonest exclamations are, '*Per Bacco*,' '*Corpo di Bacco*,' and even sometimes, in Tuscany particularly, '*Per Bacco d'India*,' or '*Per Dingi* (sometimes *Perdinci*) *Bacco* (for *Dionigi*).'" (To this we may add, "*Per Diana*," "*Corpo di Diana*," which are still common.)

"It is very common among them also to swear by some beautiful plant, as by capers (*capperi*), or the arbutus fruit (*corbazzoli*), as well as by the arch-priest, *arciprete*, whoever he may be. Nor do they disdain to give force to their sentiments on special occasions even by calling the cabbage to witness (*Cavolo*)."

To this category belongs "*Persicomiele*!" ("Peaches and apples!") the favourite exclamation of the jolly ecclesiastic in a sketch of Mario Pratesi's, quoted in this volume. It will also be remembered how another Tuscan writer, Renato Fucini, makes a conscientious priest—shocked at the strong language used by his ecclesiastical superior, who flings "*Giuraddio's*" and "*Per Dio's*" about him on the smallest provocation—neutralise the effect, so to speak, by adding the milder and more legitimate "*Bacco*." The Tuscans are celebrated throughout Italy for profane swearing. Pratesi speaks of "blaspheming according to the brutal Tuscan use," and a recent writer, spending a few weeks at Sorrento, when in conversation with a boatman, challenged the latter to guess what part of Italy he came from. The man guessed several provinces unsuccessfully, and when told that his fare was a Florentine was unwilling to believe it,

“perchè non avete bestemmiato il Santo nome di Dio.” But in this respect I believe the Sicilians and Neapolitans are not much behind the Tuscans. Their profanity is not like that of the English costermonger or bargeman—a repetition of more or less unreportable “swear-words,” without much coherence or meaning ; but rather a system of elaborate cursing, in which the most appalling evils are wished in detail to the offending party, or else a volley of undisguised abuse addressed to the unseen powers, who are apostrophised without any circumlocution whatever. “He went away, blaspheming bad words (*bestemmiando parolacce*), enough to make heaven and earth tremble,” says Verga.

“But the most general oath,” to continue our quotation, “is *accidente*, or apoplexy, which one hears on all occasions. This word as ordinarily employed is merely an expletive or exclamation, but when used in anger intentionally as a malediction, under the form ‘*Ch’un accidente te piglia*’ (May an apoplexy overtake you !), it is the most terrible imprecation that ever came from the lips of a Catholic ; for its real meaning is, ‘May so sudden a death strike you that you may have no chance of absolution by the priest, and so go down to hell.’ And as every true Catholic hopes by confession on his death-bed to obtain remission and absolution for all the sins of his life, this malediction, by cutting him off from such an arrangement, puts his soul in absolute danger of damnation ; nay, if he have not accidentally confessed immediately before the apoplexy comes, sends him posting straight to hell. The being not utterable to ears polite is seldom referred to in Rome by his actual name, *Diavolo*, and our phrase, ‘Go to the devil,’ is shocking to an Italian ; but they smooth down his name into ‘*Diamine*,’ or ‘*Diascane*,’ and thus save their consciences and their tongues from offence.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From *Roba di Roma*, ii. 221. (See also the Note to the story of “The Hermit and the Thieves” on p. 251 of the same.) “These are certainly views of heaven, angels, and good hermits, which are rather extraordinary ; but Rosa” (the *contadina* who related the story), “on being asked if the story she told was founded on fact, replied, ‘*Chi lo sa ?—who knows ?* I did not see it, but everybody says so. *Perchè no ?*”

Another Aristophanic feature, and one which seems to have appealed to the mediæval imagination all over Europe, so strongly as to have survived far beyond mediæval times, is the constant insistence on the folly and worthlessness of women. This proves, if anything (as in the fable of the lion and the statue), that it was the men who told the stories and made the proverbs; at the same time, the tendency is perhaps more marked in Italy than in other countries, and in a collection intended to be representative, it seemed right to give a sufficient number of specimens to illustrate it. Such is the rather pointless story about Domenico da Cigoli, preserved in a collection of 1600—and a glance down our two pages of proverbs will show what might otherwise seem an unfair proportion of misogynistic sentiment.

No survey of the humorous literature of Italy would be complete which did not take into account the blighting influence of the censorship, only abolished within the last thirty years. Dangerous, if not fatal, as such an institution must be to literature in general, the humorous *genre* feels its effects more than any other. It may be said that, considering the astonishing length which the earlier satirists, and even more modern writers of fairly decent repute, have gone in the direction of offences against good taste, to say nothing of morality, it is astonishing that they should have had anything to complain of in the way of restrictions. But the animus of the political censorship seems to have been reserved for anything that savoured of liberalism—a term which included the very mildest approach to a criticism on the Government or its actions; while the Inquisition has always been inclined to regard the faintest suspicion of a heretical dogma in theology as a far worse offence than any amount of mere indecency. Even had the censorship been exercised with more strictness in this direction, the facilities for contraband production would have neutralised its restraints, while it lay like a dead weight on all healthy intellectual activity. For though professedly free in some directions, the human mind is enslaved if fettered in any. The knowledge that politics, religion, or any other topic is a forbidden subject, exercises a paralysing influence on the mind, even of writers who have no particular inclination to take up that line. It is like

Bluebeard's prohibition of the hundredth room—not only does the locked door immediately arouse the desire to enter, but the ninety-nine open ones immediately lose all interest. If a practical commentary on Milton's *Areopagitica* were needed it might be found in the history of the short-lived *Conciliatore*, the journal started by Silvio Pellico and his friends at Milan about 1818. Story gives a striking picture of the Roman censorship under the Papal Government previous to 1870.

“Nothing can be either published or performed in Rome without first submitting to the censorship and obtaining the permission of the ‘Custodes morum et rotulorum.’ Nor is this a mere form ; on the contrary, it is a severe ordeal, out of which many a play comes so mangled as scarcely to be recognisable. The pen of the censor is sometimes so ruthlessly struck through whole acts and scenes that the fragments do not sufficiently hang together to make the action intelligible, and sometimes permission is absolutely refused to act the play at all. In these latter days the wicked people are so ready to catch at any words expressing liberal sentiments, and so apt to give a political significance to innocent phrases, that it behoves the censor to put on his best spectacles. Yet such is the perversity of the audience that his utmost care often proves unavailing, and sometimes plays are ordered to be withdrawn from the boards after they have been played by permission.

“The same process goes on with the *libretti* of the operas, and some of the requirements recall the fable of the ostrich, which, by merely hiding its head, fondly imagines it can render its whole body invisible. Imitating this remarkable bird, they have attempted to conceal the offence of certain well-known operas, with every air and word of which the Romans are familiar, simply by changing the title and the names of the characters, while the story remains intact. Thus certain scandalous and shameful stories attaching to the name of Alexander VI. and to the family of the Borgia, the title of Donizetti's famous opera, which every *gamin* of Rome can sing, has been altered to that of *Elena da Fosca*, and under this name alone is it permitted to be played. In like manner *I Puritani* is whitewashed in *Elvira Walton*; and in the famous *duo* of *Suoni la Tromba* the words *gridando libertà* (shouting

liberty) become *gridando lealtà* (shouting loyalty)—liberty being a kind of thing of which the less that is said or sung in Rome the better. This amiable Government also, unwilling to foster a belief in devils, rebaptises *Roberto il Diavolo* into *Roberto in Picardia*, and conceals the name of William Tell under that of Rodolfo di Sterlink. *Les Huguenots* in the same way becomes in Rome *Gli Anglicani*, and *Norma* sinks into *La Foresta d'Irmingsac*. Yet notwithstanding this, the principal airs and concerted pieces are publicly sold with their original names at all the shops. Oh, Papal ostrich! what bird is more foolish than thou?"

We find, from Minghetti's *Memoirs*, that in 1864, at Bologna (then in the Papal State), any publication had to run the gauntlet of no less than *seven* censorships, and obtain the approval of—(1) The Literary Censor; (2) the Ecclesiastical Censor; (3) the Political Censor; (4) the Sant' Uffizio (Inquisition). Then came—(5) Permission from the Bishop of the Diocese; (6) Permission from the Police; (7) Final Revision by the Inquisition.

It remains to say a few words about the translations included in this volume. When I could find any existing versions suited to my purpose, I have adopted them, always acknowledging their source; in other cases, I have myself translated the necessary passages. In doing this I have rather aimed at giving a coherent picture of what the author had in his mind, in a style which would at least give some idea of his tone and method of treatment, than at rendering his exact words, and any one having the curiosity to examine the originals would often find considerable liberties taken with the text. I have expanded here and contracted there—sometimes paraphrased, by giving corresponding English idioms or proverbs—sometimes tried to preserve the racy quaintness of the original, by rendering a mode of speech as it stands. "He said he would tie it to his finger till doomsday"—to indicate undying remembrance of an injury; and "It costs the very eyes out of one's head"—"making a hole in the water" (for labour in vain)—"As pleased as an Easter day" (*contento come una pasqua*)—are vivid and picturesque locutions which it is a pity to disguise under more commonplace phraseology. The specimens are taken from all



periods of Italian literature, and represent, as far as possible, all its departments ; though, as has been already pointed out, there are some rich and fruitful tracts of country in that wide region, in which we have been able to gather little or nothing. That the collection is in any sense complete or exhaustive cannot be pretended ; but a *Florilegium* of translations can never be other than a very sorry representative of an original literature.

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# THE HUMOUR OF ITALY.

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## *THE POET COMPLAINS OF UNREASON- ABLE FRIENDS.*

“**M**AKE me a sonnet or a canzonet,”  
Says one who's scant and short of memory.  
It seems to him that, having given me  
The theme, he's left me nought my soul should fret.  
Alas ! he knows not how I'm sorely let  
And hindered,—nor what sleepless nights I dree,  
Tossing from side to side most painfully,  
Ere from my heart I squeeze those rhymes—my debt.  
At my own charges, three fair copies then  
I make.—'Tis well it were correct before  
I send it forth among the sons of men ;  
But one thing, 'bove all else, doth vex me sore—  
No man had ever manners 'nough to say,—  
“ Here, friend, take this, and for the paper pay ! ”  
Sometimes, indeed, they may  
Treat me to half a pint of Malvoisie,  
And think they've recompensed me royally.

*Antonio Pucci (1375).*

*CALANDRINO FINDS THE STONE  
HELIOTROPE.*

THERE dwelt not long since in our city of Florence a painter named Calandrino, a man of simple mind,

and much addicted to novelties. The most of his time he spent in the company of two brother painters, Bruno and Buffalmacco, both men of humour and mirth, and somewhat satirical. There lived in Florence, at the same time, a young man of very engaging manners, witty and agreeable, called Maso del Saggio, who, hearing of the extreme simplicity of Calandrino, resolved to derive some amusement from his love of the



marvellous, and to excite his curiosity by some novel and wonderful tales. Happening, therefore, to meet him one day in the Church of St. John, and observing him attentively engaged in admiring the painting and sculpture of the tabernacle which had been lately placed over the altar in that church, he thought he had found a fit opportunity of putting his scheme into execution; and acquainting one of his friends with his intentions, they walked together to the spot where Calandrino was seated by himself, and, seeming not to be aware of his presence, began to converse on the qualities of precious stones, of which Maso spoke with all the confidence of an experienced and skilful lapidary. Calandrino lent a ready ear to this conference, and, perceiving from their loud speaking that their conversation was not of a private nature, he accosted them. Maso was not a little delighted at this, and, pursuing his discourse, Calandrino asked him where these stones were to be found. Maso replied, "They mostly abound in Berlinzone, near a city of the Baschi, in a country called Bengodi, in which the vines are tied with sausages, a goose is sold for a penny, and the goslings given into the bargain; where there is also a high mountain made of Parmesan grated cheese, whereon dwell people whose sole employ is to make macaroni and other dainties, boiling them with capon broth, and afterwards throwing them out to all who choose to catch them; and near to the mountain runs a river of white wine, the best that ever was drunk, and without one drop of water in it." "Oh!" exclaimed Calandrino, "what a delightful country to live in! But pray, sir, tell me, what do they with the capons after they have boiled them?" "The Baschi," said Maso, "eat them all!" "Have you," said Calandrino, "ever been in that country?" "How," answered Maso; "do you ask me if I were ever there? A thousand times at the least!" "And how far, I pray you, is this happy land from our city?" quoth Calandrino. "In truth," replied Maso, "the miles are scarcely to be numbered;

but, for the most part, we travel when we are in our beds at night, and if a man dream aright, he may be there in a few minutes." . . . Calandrino, observing that Maso delivered all these speeches with a steadfast and grave countenance, believed them all, and said with much simplicity, "Believe me, sir, the journey is too far for me to undertake, but if it were somewhat nearer, I should like to accompany you thither. But now we are conversing, allow me to ask you, sir, whether or not any of the precious stones you spoke of are to be found in that country?" "Yes, indeed," replied Maso; "there are two kinds of them to be found in those territories, and both possessing eminent virtues. The one kind are the sandstones of Settignano and of Montisei. . . . The other is a stone which most of our lapidaries call heliotropium, and is of admirable virtue, for whoever carries it about his person is thereby rendered invisible as long as he pleases." Calandrino then said, "This is wonderful indeed; but where else are these latter kind to be found?" To which Maso replied, "They are not infrequently to be found on our Mugnone." "Of what size and colour is this stone?" said Calandrino. "It is of various sizes," replied Maso, "some larger than others, but uniformly black." Calandrino, treasuring up all these things in his mind, and pretending to have some urgent business on hand, took leave of Maso, secretly proposing to himself to go in quest of these stones, but resolved to do nothing until he had first seen his friends, Bruno and Buffalmacco, to whom he was much attached. Having found them, and told them about the wonderful stone, he proposed that they should at once go in search of it. Bruno signified his assent, but turning to Buffalmacco, said, "I fully agree with Calandrino, but I do not think that this is the proper time for our search, as the sun is now high, and so hot that we shall find all the stones on Mugnone dried and parched, and the very blackest will

now seem the whitest. But in the morning, when the dew is on the ground, and before the sun has dried the earth, every stone will have its true colour. Besides, there are many labourers now working in the plain, who, seeing us



occupied in so serious a search, may guess what we are seeking for, and may chance to find the stones before us, and we may then have our labour for our pains. Therefore, in my opinion, this is an enterprise that should be taken in hand early in the morning, when the black stones will be easily distinguished from the white, and a festival day were the best of all others, as there will be nobody abroad to discover us." Buffalmacco applauded the advice of Bruno, and Calandrino assenting to it, they agreed that Sunday morning next ensuing should be the time when they would all go in pursuit of the stone; but Calandrino entreated them above all things not to reveal it to any person living, as it was confided to him in strict secrecy. Calandrino waited impatiently for Sunday morning, when he called upon his companions before break of day. They all then went out of the city at the gate of San Gallo, and did not halt until they came to the plain of Mugnone, where they immediately commenced their search for the marvellous stone. Calandrino went stealing on

before the other two, persuading himself that he was born to find the heliotropium; and, looking on every side of him, he rejected all other stones but the black, with which he filled first his breast, and afterwards both of his pockets. He then took off his large painting-apron, which he fastened with his girdle in the manner of a sack, and filled that also; and, still not satisfied, he spread abroad his cloak, which, being also loaded with stones, he bound up carefully, for fear of losing the very best of them. Buffal-macco and Bruno during this time attentively eyed Calandrino, and observing that he had now completely loaded himself, and that their dinner-hour was drawing nigh, Bruno, according to their arrangement, said to Buffal-macco, pretending not to see Calandrino, although he was not far from them, "Buffal-macco, what has become of Calandrino?" Buffal-macco, who saw him close at hand, gazing all round, as if desirous to find him, replied, "I saw him even now before us, hard by." "Undoubtedly," said Bruno, "he has given us the slip and gone secretly home to dinner, and, making fools of us, has left us to pick up black stones on these scorching plains of Mugnone." Calandrino, hearing them make use of these words while he stood so near to them, imagined that he had possessed himself of the genuine stone, and that by virtue of its qualities he was become invisible to his companions. His joy was now unbounded, and without saying a word, he resolved to return home with all speed, leaving his friends to provide for themselves. Buffal-macco, perceiving his intent, said to Bruno, "Why should we remain here any longer? Let us return to the city." To which Bruno replied, "Yes, let us go; but I vow that Calandrino shall no more make a fool of me; and were I now as near him as I was not long since, I would give him such a remembrance on the heel with this flint stone as should stick by him a month, and give him a lasting lesson;" and are



he had well finished the words he struck Calandrino a violent blow on the heel with the stone. Though the blow was evidently very painful, Calandrino still preserved his silence, and only mended his pace. Buffalmacco then, selecting another large flint stone, said to Bruno, "Thou seest this pebble! If Calandrino were but here he should have a brave knock on the loins;" and, taking aim, he threw it and struck Calandrino a violent blow on the back; and then all the way along the plains of Mugnone they did nothing but pelt him with stones, jesting and laughing until they came to the gate of San Gallo. They then threw down the remainder of the stones they had gathered, and, stepping before Calandrino into the gateway, acquainted the guards with the whole matter, who, in order to support the jest, would not seem to see Calandrino as he passed by them, and were exceedingly amused to observe him sweat and groan under his burdensome load. Without resting himself in any place, he proceeded straight to his



own house, which was near the mills, and was neither met nor seen by any one, as everybody was then at dinner. When he entered his own house, ready to sink under his burden, his wife—a handsome and discreet woman of the name of Monna Tessa—happened to be standing at the head of the stairs, and being disconcerted and impatient at his long absence, somewhat angrily exclaimed, “I thought the devil would never let thee come home! All the city have dined, and yet we must remain without our dinner.” When Calandrino heard these words, and found that he was not invisible to his wife, he fell into a fit of rage, and exclaimed, “Wretch as thou art, thou hast utterly undone me; but I will reward thee for it;” and ascending into a small room, and ridding himself of the stones, he ran down again to his wife, and seizing her by the hair of the head threw her on the ground, beat and kicked her in the most unmerciful manner. Buffalmacco and Bruno, after they had spent some time in laughter with the guards at the gate, followed Calandrino at their leisure, and, arriving at his house and hearing the disturbance upstairs, they called out to him. Calandrino, still in a furious rage, came to the window and entreated they would come up to him. They, counterfeiting great surprise, ascended the stairs, and found the chamber floor covered with stones and Calandrino’s wife seated in a corner, her limbs severely bruised, her hair dishevelled, and her face bleeding; and on the other side Calandrino himself, weary and exhausted, flung on a chair. After regarding him for some time, they said, “How now, Calandrino, art thou building a house, that thou hast provided thyself with so many loads of stones?” and then added, “And Monna Tessa—what has happened to her? You surely have been beating her! What is the meaning of this?” Calandrino, exhausted with carrying the stones, and with his furious gust of passion, and moreover, with the misfortune which he considered had befallen him, could not



collect sufficient spirits to speak a single word in reply. Whereupon Buffalmacco said further, "Calandrino, if you have cause for anger in any other quarter, yet you should not have made such mockery of your friends as you have done to-day, carrying us out to the plains of Mugnone, like a couple of fools, and leaving us there without taking leave of us, or so much as bidding good-day. But, be assured, this is the last time thou wilt ever serve us in this manner." Calandrino, somewhat recovered, replied, "Alas! my friends, be not offended; the case is very different from what you think! Unfortunate man that I am! the rare and precious stone that you speak of, I found, and will relate the whole truth to you. When you asked each other the first time what was become of me, I was hard by you, not more than two yards away; and, perceiving that you saw me not, I went before you, smiling to myself to hear you vent your rage upon me;" and recounted all that had happened on his way home, and, to convince them, showed them where he was struck on the back and on the heel; and further added, "As I passed through the gates, I saw you standing with the guards, but by virtue of the stone I carried in my bosom, was undiscovered by you all; and in going through the streets I met many friends and acquaintances, who are in the daily habit of stopping and conversing with me, and yet none of them addressed me, as I passed invisible to them all. But at length arriving at my own house, this fiend of a woman waiting on the stair-head by ill luck happened to see me,—and you well know that women cause all things to lose their virtue,—so that I, who might have called myself the only happy man in Florence, am now the most miserable of all. Therefore did I justly beat her, as long as my strength would allow me, and I know no reason why I should not yet tear her in a thousand pieces, for I may well curse the day of our marriage, and the hour she entered my house." Buffalmacco and Bruno, when

they heard this, feigned the greatest astonishment, though they were ready to burst with laughter; but when they saw Calandrino rise in a rage, with intent to beat his wife again, they stepped between them, protesting that she was in no way to blame, but rather he himself, who, knowing beforehand that women cause all things to lose their virtue, had not expressly commanded her not to be seen in his presence all that day, until he had satisfied himself of the real qualities of the stone; and that, doubtless, Providence had deprived him of his good fortune, because, though his friends had accompanied him and assisted in the search, he had deceived them and not allowed them a share in the benefit of the discovery. After much more conversation, they with difficulty reconciled him to his wife, and, leaving him overwhelmed with grief for the loss of the heliotropium, took their departure.

*Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375).*

### *STORY OF DANTE AND THE SMITH.*

WHEN Dante had dined he went out, and passing by the Porta S. Pietro, heard a blacksmith beating iron upon the anvil, and singing some of his verses like a song, jumbling the lines together, mutilating and confusing them, so that it seemed to Dante he was receiving a great injury. He said nothing, but going into the blacksmith's shop, where there were many articles made in iron, he took up his hammer and pincers and scales and many other things, and threw them out into the road. The blacksmith, turning round upon him, cried out, "What the devil are you doing? are you mad?" "What are *you* doing?" said Dante. "I am working at my proper business," said the blacksmith, "and you are spoiling my work, throwing it out into the road."

Said Dante, "If you do not like me to spoil your things, do not spoil mine." "What thing of yours am I spoiling?" said the man. And Dante replied, "You are singing something of mine, but not as I made it. I have no other trade but this, and you spoil it for me." The blacksmith, too proud to acknowledge his fault, but not knowing how to reply, gathered up his things and returned to his work; and when he sang again, sang Tristram and Launcelot, and left Dante alone.

*Franco Sacchetti. (1335-1400).*

### MESSER BERNABO AND THE MILLER.

MESSER BERNABO, Lord of Milan, being outwitted by the clever reasoning of a miller, bestowed upon him a valuable benefice. Now this lord was in his time greatly feared beyond all other rulers, and though he was cruel, yet was there in his cruelty a great measure of justice. Among many cases which happened to him was this—that a rich abbot, for a certain act of negligence (in that he had not properly fed two hounds belonging to the said lord, and so had spoilt their tempers), was by him fined 4000 *scudi*. At this the abbot began to ask for mercy, and the said lord thereupon said to him: "If thou declarest unto me four things, I will remit everything; and the things are these—I will that thou shouldst tell me how far it is from here to heaven; how much water there is in the sea; what they are doing in hell; and what is the worth of my person." The abbot hearing this began to sigh, and thought himself in worse plight than before; yet, for the sake of peace and to gain time, he prayed Bernabò that it would please him to grant him a term for the answering of such deep questions. And the lord granted him the whole of the following day,

and, as one impatient to hear the end of the matter, made him give security that he would return. The abbot returned to his abbey exceeding sorrowful and full of thought, and puffing and blowing like a frightened horse. When he had got thither, he met with a miller who was one of his tenants, and who, seeing him thus afflicted, said: "My lord, what is the matter, that ye puff and blow on this wise?" Said the abbot: "I have good cause, for his lordship is going to be the ruin of me if I do not declare unto him four things, which neither Solomon nor Aristotle could do." Said the miller: "What things are these?" The abbot told him. Then the miller thought for a while, and said to the abbot: "Sir, I will get ye out of this strait, an ye will." The abbot replied: "Would to God it might be so!" Said the miller: "I think both God and the saints will be willing." The abbot, who knew not what he would be at, said: "If thou doest it, take from me what thou wilt, for thou shalt ask me for nothing that I will not give thee, if it be possible." . . . Then said the miller: "I must put on your tunic and hood, and I will shave my beard, and to-morrow morning, very early, I will go into his presence, saying that I am the abbot, and I will settle the four questions in such a way that I think he will be content." The abbot could not wait a moment before he had put the miller in his place, and so it was done. Early in the morning the miller set out, and when he had reached the gate of Bernabò's house, he knocked and said that such and such an abbot wished to answer certain questions which the lord had put to him. The lord, willing to hear what the abbot had to say, and wondering that he had returned so quickly, had him called. The miller, coming into his presence in a room which was not very well lighted, made his obeisance, holding his hand as much as possible before his face, and was asked by Bernabò whether he were able to answer the four questions. And he replied: "My lord,

I am. Ye asked how far it is from here to heaven; from this spot it is just thirty-six millions, eight hundred and fifty-four thousand, seventy-two and a half miles, and twenty-two paces." Said Bernabò: "Thou hast given it very accurately; how wilt thou prove this?" The miller replied: "Have the distance measured, and if it be not even as I say, ye may have me hanged by the neck. In the second place, ye asked how much water there is in the sea. This was very hard to find out, since it is a thing that is never still, and there is always more being added; but I have found out that there are in the sea 25,982,000,000 hogsheads, 7 barrels, 12 gallons, and 2 glasses." Said the lord: "How knowest thou this?" The miller answered: "I reckoned it as well as I could,—if ye do not believe me, send and fetch barrels, and have it measured. And if it be not correct, ye may have me quartered. In the third place, your lordship asked what was being done in hell. In hell there is hanging, drawing, quartering, and cutting off of heads going on,—neither less nor more than what your lordship is doing here." Bernabò asked: "What reason dost thou give for this?" He replied: "I have talked with a man who had been there, and it was from this man Dante the Florentine heard what he wrote concerning the things of hell; but this man is dead, and if ye do not believe me, send and ask him. Fourthly, ye would know what was the value of your lordship's person, and I say that it is worth twenty-nine pence." When Messer Bernabò heard this, he turned to him in a fury, saying, "May the plague seize thee! Dost think I am worth no more than an earthen pipkin?" The miller replied, and not without great fear: "My Lord, listen to reason; ye know that our Lord was sold for thirty pence,—I am surely right in supposing that ye are worth one penny less than he." When Bernabò heard this, he imagined that this man could not be the abbot, and, looking fixedly at him, perceiving that he was a man of far more sense than

the abbot, he said to him : "Thou art not the abbot." The terror which the miller then had, every one may imagine for himself ; he knelt down, and with clasped hands asked for mercy, telling Bernabò that he was the tenant of the abbey mill, and how and why he had appeared before him in this disguise, and that it was rather to please him than from any ill intention. But Bernabò, hearing this, said : "Well, then, since he has made thee abbot, and thou art worth more than he, by the faith of God, I will confirm thee in thine office ; and it is my will that from henceforth thou be the abbot, and he the miller, and that thou have all the revenue of the monastery, and he of the mill." And thus he caused it to be during all the rest of his life, that the miller should be an abbot, and the abbot a miller.

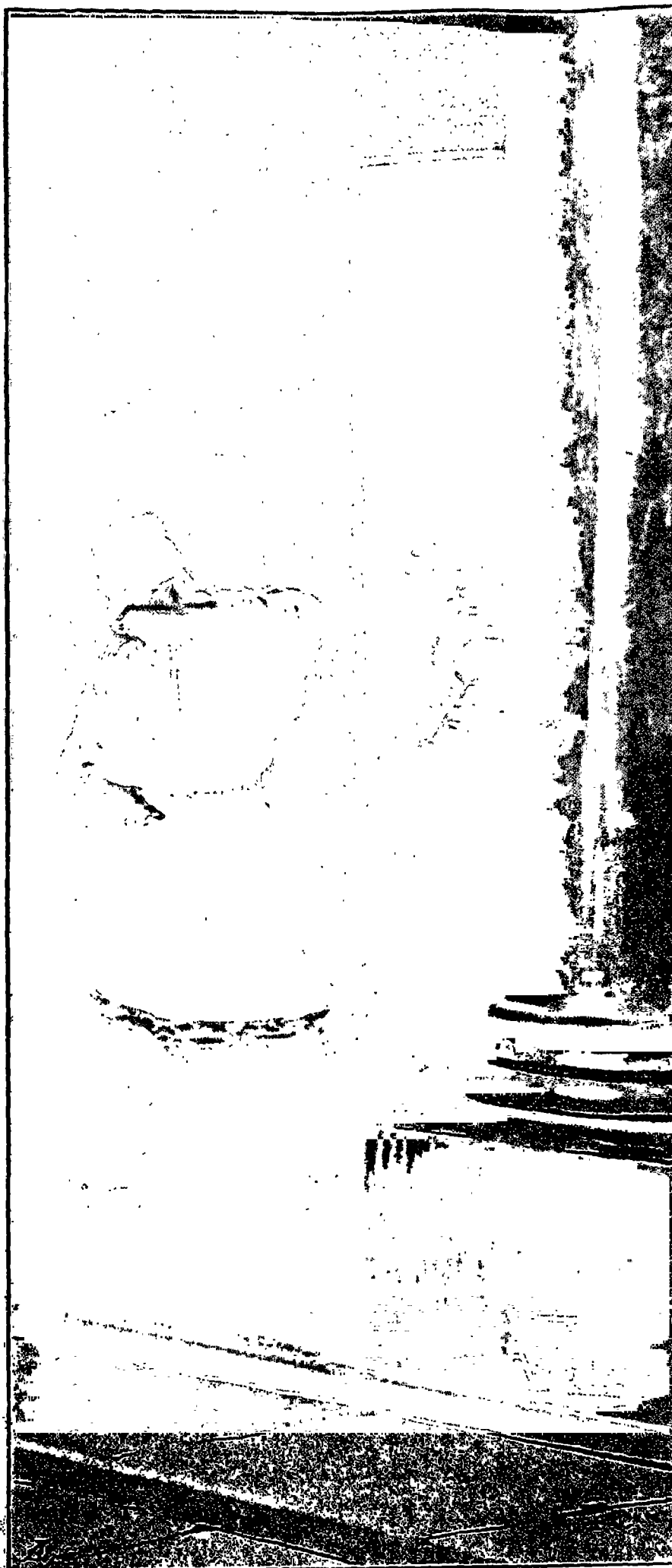
*Franco Sacchetti.*

### *HOW SER NASTAGIO WAS COLLECTED FOR IN CHURCH.*

**F**AUSTINO, of Bologna, was in love with the beautiful Eugenia, but was unable to meet her on account of the hostility of her parents, who kept a very strict watch over her, and debarred her from the very sight of him as much as they possibly could. Yet her mother, being of a religious turn of mind, was unwilling that she should relinquish her usual attendance on divine worship, and herself accompanied her daughter every morning to hear mass at a church near their own house, but at so very early an hour that not even the artisans of the city, much less the young gentry of the place, were stirring. And there she heard service performed by a priest expressly on her own account, though several other persons might happen to be present, who were in the habit of rising early.

Now among these was a certain corn merchant named Ser Nastagio de' Rodiotti, a man who had driven many a hard bargain and thriven wonderfully in his trade, but of so devout a turn withal that he would not for the world have made an usurious contract, or even speculated to any extent, without having first attended mass. He lost not a single opportunity of showing himself at church among the earliest of the congregation, and was ready for business before a great portion of his fellow-citizens were stirring.

Now in a short time it also reached the ears of Faustino, through the good offices, it is supposed, of the young





lady, that High Mass was to be heard every morning at a certain church, with every particular relating to the devotees who attended, and the nearest way thither. Rejoiced at this news, her lover now resolved to rise somewhat earlier than he had been accustomed to do, that he might avail himself of the same advantage the lady enjoyed, in beginning the day with religious duties. For this purpose he assumed a different dress, the better to deceive the eyes of her careful mother, being perfectly aware that she only made her appearance thus early with her daughter for the sake of concealing her from his sight. In this way the young lady had the merit of bringing Faustino to church, where they gazed at each other with the utmost devotion, except, indeed, when the unlucky tradesman just mentioned happened to place himself, as was frequently the case, exactly in their way, so as to interrupt the silent communion of souls. And this he did in so vexatious a manner that they could hardly observe each other for a moment without exposing themselves to his searching eye and keen observation. Greatly displeased at this kind of inquisition, the lover frequently wished the devout corn dealer in Purgatory, or that he would at least offer up his prayers in another church. Such an antipathy did he at length conceive to Ser Nastagio, that he resolved to employ his utmost efforts to prevail upon him to withdraw himself from that spot. He at last hit upon a plan which he thought sure to succeed, in a manner equally safe and amusing. He hastened without delay to the officiating priest, whom he addressed as follows:—"It has ever been esteemed, my good Messer Pastore, a most heavenly and laudable disposition to devote ourselves to the relief of our poorer brethren. And this you doubtless know far better than I can tell you. . . . But there are many who, however destitute, feel ashamed to come forward for the purpose of begging alms. Now I think that I have of late



observed one of them in a person who frequents your church. He was formerly a Jew, but not long ago he became a Christian, and one whose exemplary life and conduct render him in all respects worthy of the name. There is not a more destitute being on the face of the earth; while such is his modesty that I assure you I have frequently had the utmost difficulty in persuading him to accept of alms. It would really be a meritorious act were you to touch some morning on his cruel misfortunes, relating his conversion to our faith, and the singular modesty with which he attempts to conceal his wants. This would probably procure for him a handsome contribution; and if you will only have the kindness to apprise me of the day, I will bring a number of my friends along with me, and we shall be sure to find this poor fellow seated in your church."

Our kind-hearted priest cheerfully complied with the wily lover's request. He proposed the next Sunday morning, when a large number of people would be present, regretting that he had not been sooner informed of the affair. Faustino next gave an exact description of the corn merchant, observing that the poor man always appeared neat and clean, so that he could not possibly mistake him. Then, taking leave of the good friar, he hastened to communicate this piece of mischief to some of his young companions. Punctually next Sunday they were at the church, even early enough to hear the first mass; and there Messer Nastagio was seen at his usual post, surrounded by a crowd of people. After going through the Evangelists and the Creed, and muttering a few Aves, the good priest paused and looked about him; then, wiping his forehead, and taking breath for a while, he again addressed the congregation as follows:—"Dearly beloved brethren, you must be aware that the most pleasing thing you can do in the eyes of the Lord is to show your charity towards

poorer Christians. . . . As I know you are not wanting in charity, but rather abounding in good works, I am not afraid to inform you that there is a most deserving yet destitute object before you, who, though too modest to urge your compassion, is in every way worthy of it. Pray take pity upon him. Behold him!" he cried, pointing full at Ser Nastagio: "Lo! thou art the man. Yes!" he continued, while the corn-merchant stared at him in the utmost astonishment; "yes, thou art the man! Thy modesty shall no longer conceal thee from the eyes of the people which are now fixed upon thee. For though thou wert once an Israelite, my friend, thou art now one of the lost sheep which are found, and if thou hast not much temporal, thou hast a hoard of eternal wealth." He addressed himself during the whole of this time, both by words and signs, to Ser Nastagio, yet the poor merchant could by no means persuade himself against the evidence of his own reason that he was the person pointed out. Without stirring, therefore, he somewhat reluctantly put his hand into his pocket, preparing to bestow his alms in the same manner as the rest of the congregation. The first person to present his contribution was the author of the trick, who, approaching the spot where the merchant stood, offered his alms, and, in spite of Ser Nastagio, dropped them into his hat. And though the incensed tradesman exclaimed, "I have a longer purse than thou hast ears!" it availed him nothing. The good priest pursued his theme without noticing Ser Nastagio's remark, except by saying, "Give no credit to his words, good people, but give him alms, give him alms; it is his modest merit which prevents him from accepting them. Yes, go thrust them into the good man's pockets; fill his hat, his shoes, his clothes with them, and make him bear away with him the good fruits of your charity." Then once more directing his attention to the confused and angry merchant, he exclaimed, "Do not look thus ashamed, but

take them, take them ; for, believe me, good friend, many greater and better men have been reduced to the same piteous plight. You should rather consider it as an honour than otherwise, inasmuch as your necessities have not been the consequence of your own misconduct, but solely arise from your embracing the light of truth."

The priest had no sooner ended than there was a general rush of the whole congregation towards the place where the merchant stood, endeavouring who should be first to deposit their donations in his hands, while he in vain attempted to resist the tide of charitable contributions which now poured in on every side. He had likewise to struggle against his own avarice, for he would willingly have received the money, though he did all in his power to repulse their gifts. When the tumult had a little subsided, Ser Nastagio began to attack the priest in the most virulent terms, until the preacher was inclined to suspect that in some way he had been misinformed. He thus began to make his excuses, as well as he could, for the error into which he had fallen ; but the lover's purpose was accomplished, and the deed could not be recalled. For the story was quickly circulated through the whole city, to the infinite amusement of all its inhabitants, and Ser Nastagio was never known to enter that church again.

*Girolamo Parabosco (16th century).*

## HOW A BARRISTER GOT HIS MONEY'S WORTH.

I N our city there flourished a certain learned advocate, a member of the great Castello family, Messer Dionisio by name. Having occasion to enter into the legal arena with another advocate, whose name I cannot just now recollect, Messer Dionisio was retained as counsel to Signor Giovanni

de' Bentivogli. The case was tried before our worthy magistrate, Messer Nicoluzzo de' Piccoluomini, of Siena ; and as it often happens to these gentlemen of the robe, when deeply engaged in the interests of their clients, they became so very personal in the cause of their principals, that at length our friend's adversary, unable to bear his bitter taunts, fairly challenged his honour and veracity, which so incensed Messer Dionisio that, in a fit of sudden passion, he clenched his fist and smote his learned antagonist very severely on the mouth. The presiding magistrate, greatly scandalised at our friend's new method of enforcing his arguments, vigorously remonstrated with him, and threatened to enforce the full penalty of the law, assuring him that he dealt too mildly in not committing him on the spot. He would have executed his menace, had not the high qualities and connections of Messer Dionisio restrained him. He replied to the judge's threats, with the most perfect composure, "Most noble prætor, according to the tenor of our civil law, I believe you will only be able to demand about ten pieces from me ;" and putting his hand in his pocket, he drew forth ten broad gold ducats, saying, "Take only what the law allows you, and hand me the remainder back." But the judge, seizing in a rage upon the whole, cried, "You must apply elsewhere for the remainder;" which again brought the angry counsellor upon his legs. Turning quickly round upon his adversary, now busily employed in repairing the ruins of his jaws, and uttering fierce exclamations for justice, our friend again addressed him : "If this be the case, I must have what I have paid for, over and above ;" and he struck him a more violent blow than before upon his left cheek. He then addressed the judge : "My lord, you have made me pay for more than the amount of both the arguments I have applied in the very face of my learned brother ; but keep the money—he is a pitiful advocate indeed who would scruple to take advantage of his opponent for the sake of

ten ducats. I have had my revenge." And turning his back upon the court, he left his brother advocate quite unable to make any reply, and grievously lamenting and appealing to the magistrate for justice. He was at last obliged to be patient, for though somewhat incensed the court could not refrain from indulging a degree of mirth at Dionisio's singular arguments. The only sentence obtained that day in court was, "He who received the injury sustained all the loss."

*Sabadino degli Arienti (c. 1450-1500).*

### THE MERRY JESTS OF BUFFALMACCO THE PAINTER.

**B**UONAMICO DI CRISTOFANO, nicknamed Buffal-macco, was a pupil of Andrea Tafi, and has been celebrated as a jester by Boccaccio. Franco Sacchetti also tells how, when Buffalmacco was still a boy with Andrea, his master had the habit, when the nights were long, of getting up before day to work, and calling his boys. This was displeasing to Buonamico, who had to rise in the middle of his best sleep, and he considered how he might prevent Andrea from getting up before day to work, and this was what occurred to him. Having found thirty great beetles in an ill-kept cellar, he fastened on each of their backs a little candle, and at the hour when Andrea was used to rise, he put them one by one through a hole in the door into Andrea's chamber, having first lighted the candles. His master awaking at the hour for calling Buffalmacco, and seeing the lights, was seized with terror and began to tremble like a fearful old man as he was, and to say his prayers and repeat the psalms; and at last, putting his head under the clothes, he thought no more that night of calling Buffalmacco, but lay trembling

with fear till daybreak. The morning being come, he asked Buonamico if, like him, he had seen more than a thousand devils. Buonamico answered, "No," for he had kept his eyes closed, and wondered he had not been called. "What!" said Tafi, "I had something else to think of than painting, and am resolved to go into another house." The next night, although Buonamico only put three beetles into Tafi's chamber, yet he, from the last night's terror and the fear of

those few devils, could get no sleep at all, and, as soon as it was day, left the house determined never to return, and it took a great deal of good counsel to make him change his mind. At last Buonamico brought the priest to him, to console him. And Tafi and Buonamico discussing the matter, Buonamico said: "I have always heard say that demons are the greatest enemies of God, and consequently they ought to be the chief adversaries of painters, because not only do we always make them hideous, but we also never cease making saints on all the walls, and so cause men in despite of the devils to become more and more devout. So these devils being enraged against us, as they have greater power by night than by day, they come playing us these tricks,



and it will be worse if this custom of getting up early is not quite given up." With such words Buffalmacco managed the matter, what the priest said helping him ; so that Tafi left off getting up early, and the devils no longer went about the house at night with candles. But not many months after, Tafi, drawn by the desire of gain, and having forgotten his fears, began afresh to get up early and to call Buffalmacco ; whereon the beetles began again to appear, until he was forced by his fears to give it up entirely, being earnestly counselled to do so by the priest. And the matter being noised abroad in the city for a time, neither Tafi nor any other painter ventured to get up at night to work.

While painting the church of the convent of Faenza, at Florence, Buffalmacco, who was very careless and negligent in his dress, as in other things, did not always wear his hood and mantle, as was the fashion at the time ; and the nuns, watching him through the screen they had erected, began to complain that it did not please them to see him in his doublet. At last, as he always appeared in the same fashion, they began to think that he was only some boy employed in mixing colours ; and they gave him to understand, through their abbess, that they should prefer to see his master, and not always him. To this Buonamico answered good-humouredly that when the master came he would let them know, understanding, nevertheless, how little confidence they had in him. Then he took a stool, and placed upon it another, and on the top he put a pitcher or water-jug, and fastened a hood on the handle, and covered up the rest of the jug with a cloak, fastening it well behind the tables ; and having fixed a pencil in the spout of the jug, he went away. The nuns coming again to see the picture through a hole that they had made in the screen, saw the supposed master in his fine attire, and not doubting that he was working with all his might, doing very different work from what that boy did, for several days were quite content. At

last, being desirous to see what fine things the master had done in the last fortnight (during which time Buonamico had not been there at all), one night, thinking he was gone,



they went to see his picture, and were overcome with confusion when one more bold than the rest detected the solemn master, who during the fortnight had done no work at all. But, acknowledging that he had only treated them as they



deserved, and that the work which he had done was worthy of praise, they sent their steward to call Buonamico back ; and he with great laughter went back to his work, letting them see the difference between men and water-jugs, and that it does not always do to judge a man's work by his clothes. So in a few days he finished a picture with which they were greatly pleased, except that the faces seemed to them to be too pale and wan. Buonamico having heard this, and knowing that the abbess had some wine which was the best in Florence, told them that if they wished to remedy the defect, it could only be done by mixing the colours with good wine ; and then if the cheeks were touched with the colour, they would become red and of a more lively aspect. The good sisters hearing this, and ready to believe everything, kept him always supplied with excellent wine while he worked ; and he, while enjoying the wine himself, to please them, made his colours more fresh and bright.

*Vasari* (1512-1574).

A CERTAIN painter had a picture, wherein was an ox which looked better than the rest. Michael Angelo Buonarotti being asked why the painter had made it more life-like than the rest, replied, "Every painter succeeds best in a portrait of himself."

*Vasari.*

ANOTHER painter had executed a historical picture, in which every figure was copied from some other artist, inso-much that no part of the picture was his own. It was shown to Michael Angelo Buonarotti, who, when he had seen it, was asked by a very intimate friend of his what he thought of it. He replied : " He has done well, but, at the

Day of Judgment, when all bodies will resume their own limbs again, I do not know what will become of that historical picture, for there will be nothing left of it."

*Vasari.*

*CHORUS FROM "LA MANDRAGOLA."*

HOW happy is he, as all may see  
 Who has the good fortune a fool to be,  
 And what you tell him will always believe!  
 No ambition can grieve,  
 No fear can affright him  
 Which are wont to be seeds  
 Of pain and annoy.  
 This doctor of ours,  
 'Tis not hard to delight him—  
 If you tell him 'twill gain him  
 His heart's wish and joy,  
 He'll believe in good faith that an ass can fly,—  
 Or that black is white, and the truth a lie,—  
 All things in the world he may well forget—  
 Save the one whereon his whole heart is set.

*Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527).*

*FRA TIMOTEO'S MONOLOGUE.*

FRA TIMOTEO (*alone*).

I HAVE not been able to get a wink of sleep to-night, for wondering how Callimaco and the rest have been getting on. I have been trying to pass the time, while waiting, by attending to various matters. I said the morning prayers,

read a chapter of the *Lives of the Holy Fathers*, went into church and lit a lamp which had gone out, and changed the veil of a statue of the Madonna which works miracles. How many times have I told the monks to keep that image clean? And then they wonder why there is a lack of devotion! I remember the time when there were five hundred images here, and now there are not twenty. This is all our own fault; we have not been able to keep up the reputation of the place. We used to go in procession after service every evening, and have the Lauds sung every Saturday. We always made vows here, so as to get fresh images, and we used to encourage the men and women who came to confession to make vows likewise. Nowadays none of these things are done, and we are astonished that there is so little enthusiasm! What an amazingly small quantity of brains these monks of mine have among them!

*Niccolo Machiavelli.*

### THE MEDIÆVAL UNDERGRADUATE.

THERE was once at Padua a Sicilian scholar called Pontius, who seeing one day a countryman with a pair of fat fowls, pretending that he wanted to buy them, made a bargain with him and said, "Come home with me, and over and above the price I will give thee some breakfast." So he led him to a place where there was a bell-tower, which is separate from the church, so that one can go all round it; and opposite one of the four faces of the Campanile was the end of a little street. Here Pontius, having first thought of what he wished to do, said to the countryman: "I have wagered these fowls with one of my comrades, who says that this tower is certainly forty feet in circumference; and I say no. So just at that moment when I met you I had been buying this

string to measure it with ; and before we go home, I want to ascertain which of us has won." Thus saying, he took the string out of his sleeve, and gave one end of it to the countryman to hold, and saying, "Give here !" he took the fowls from him, and holding the other end of the string, began to go round the tower, as if to measure it, making the countryman stop on that side of the tower which was opposite the end of the little street. When he had reached this side he drove a nail into the wall and tied the string to it, and thus leaving it, went off quietly down the street with the fowls. The countryman remained for a great space of time, waiting till he should have finished measuring ; but at last, when he had several times said, "What are you doing so long ?" he went to see, and found that the one who held the string was not Pontius, but a nail driven into the wall, which was all that remained to him as payment for the fowls.

*Baldassarre Castiglione (1478-1529).*

THE Bishop of Corvia, in order to find out the intentions of the Pope, one day said to him : "Holy father, it is commonly reported in all Rome, and even in the palace, that your holiness is about to make me governor." Then the Pope replied, "Never mind what they say ; they are nothing but low-tongued rascals."

*Baldassarre Castiglione.*

A CERTAIN pleader, to whom his adversary said, in presence of the judge : "What art thou barking for ?" replied, "Because I see a thief."

*Baldassarre Castiglione.*

THE Archbishop of Florence once said to Cardinal Alessandrino that a man has nothing but his goods, his body, and his soul ; and that the first is ruined for him by the

lawyers, the second by the doctors, and the third by the theologians. Then Giuliano the Magnificent quoted the remarks by Nicoletto—viz., that it was rare to find a lawyer who would go to law, a doctor who would take physic, or a theologian who was a good Christian.

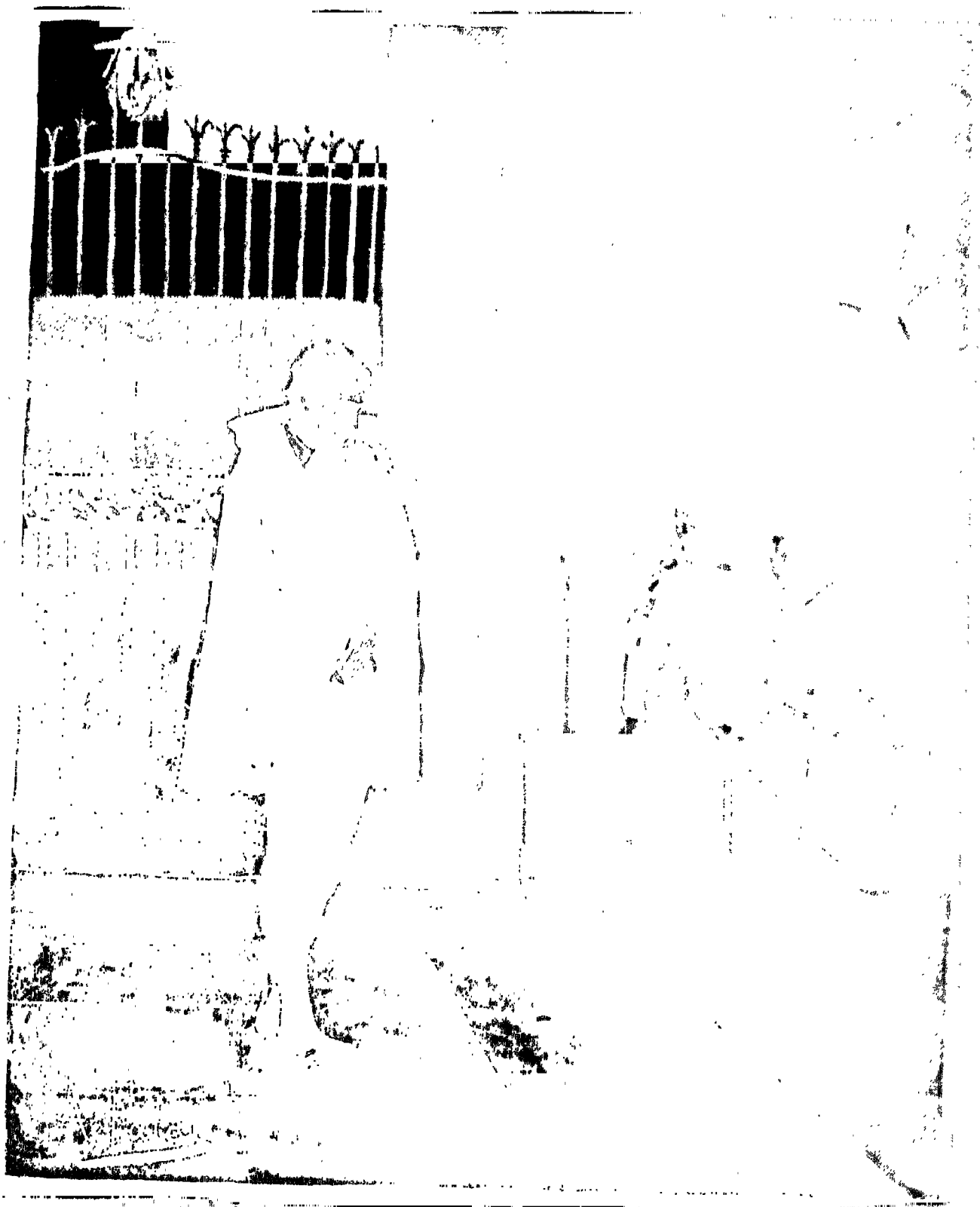
*Baldassarre Castiglione.*

A MISER, who had refused to sell his corn while it was dear, seeing that the price had gone down, hanged himself in despair to one of the beams in his chamber. One of his servants, having heard the noise, ran in, and finding his master hanging from the ceiling, forthwith cut the rope and so saved his life. When the miser had come to himself, he insisted that the servant should pay for the rope which he had cut.

*Baldassarre Castiglione.*

As Duke Frederic of Urbino was one day talking of what was to be done with a large quantity of earth, which had been dug up in order to lay the foundation of his palace, an abbot who was present said: "My lord, I have been thinking where it should be put, and I have a good idea: order a great ditch to be dug, and you may then dispose of the earth without further hindrance." The duke replied, not without a smile: "What are we to do with the earth which will be dug from this new ditch?" The abbot answered: "Let it be made big enough to hold both." And thus, although the duke tried to show him that the larger the ditch the more earth would be dug out of it, he could not understand that it could not be made large enough to contain both heaps, but only replied, "Make it so much the larger."

*Baldassarre Castiglione.*

*A ROMAN PRELATE OF 1519.*

. . . **H**IS hungry congregation waits in vain,  
Wishing he'd come the Gospel to explain,  
Begin, or rather end, his dull tho' noisy strain.

At last he comes, deep-crimson'd o'er his face,  
 A certain token of unlettered grace ;  
 He mounts, the pulpit crackles with his weight,  
 His awful eyebrows the most distant threat ;  
 Against his brethren he exclaims aloud  
 That they are too luxurious in their food,  
 In taverns more than churches take delight,  
 Feast on fat capons ; quaff the livelong night ;  
 While, could you rummage his own private cell,  
 No noble's larder e'er was stuffed so well.

Let me have books those moments to beguile,  
 When the rich prelate, in his haughty style,  
 Roars to his porter, " Here, let who will come,  
 Be sure you tell them I am not at home."  
 So monks, carousing at their favourite meals,  
 Silence the interrupting sound of bells.  
 " Sir," should I say (for *Sir's* the proper word  
 Even at a cobbler's stall, or tailor's board),  
 " Good sir," though to a tattered Swiss, " I pray,  
 May I not see His Eminence to-day ?"  
 " *No sproka to my Maister bater goud,  
 You go your lodgee, come as when you could.*"<sup>1</sup>  
 " Sir, be so kind at least to let him know  
 That Lewis Ariosto is below."  
 He answers that his Rev'ence would not see  
 St. Paul himself, though on an embassy. . . .

*Lodovico Ariosto (1474-1533).*

<sup>1</sup> In the original, these lines are a barbarous mixture of Spanish and Italian.

*THE VALLEY OF LOST LUMBER.*

[Astolfo journeys to the Moon, on the winged steed Hippogrif, to recover the wits which Orlando has lost for love of the Princess Angelica.]



... NOW Astolfo was conducted by his guide into a narrow valley between two steep mountains. And in this place there was miraculously collected together everything which gets lost on earth, either through

some failing of our own, or by the fault of time or fortune. I mean not only riches and power, but also those things which fortune alone can neither give nor take away. Many



a reputation lies up there, which time, like a moth, has long been gnawing at here below, and also numberless vows and good resolutions made by sinners. There we should find the tears and sighs of lovers, the time lost in gaming, all the wasted leisure of ignorant men, and all vain intentions which have never been put into action. Of fruitless desires there are so many that they lumber up the greater part of that place. In short, whatever you have lost here below you will find again if you ascend thither.

Our Paladin, as he passed along, now and again asking questions of his guide, saw a mountain of blown bladders, which seemed to be full of noise inside. And he knew that these were the ancient crowns of the Assyrians, and of Lydia, and of the Persians and Greeks, which once were famous, while now their very names are almost forgotten. Close by he saw great masses of gold and silver piled up in heaps, which were those gifts that people made, in hopes of getting a reward, to kings and princes. He saw wreaths of flowers with traps hidden among them, and heard, in asking, that they were flatteries. Verses that men made in praise of their patrons are seen there, under the form of grasshoppers who have hurt themselves with chirping. . . . He saw many broken bottles of different kinds, and found that they stand for the service men pay to courts, and the thanks they get for it. Then he came to a great pool of spilt broth, and asking what it was, his guide told him that it represented the alms people direct to be given after their deaths. Then he passed by a great heap of various flowers, which once were sweet-scented, but now have a foul odour; this was the gift (if we may be permitted to say so) that Constantine bestowed on the good Pope Sylvester.

He saw a great quantity of twigs covered with bird-lime; there, O fair ladies, are your beauty! He saw . . . but it would be an endless task to count up the things which were shown him there. The only thing he did not find was

folly: that remains here on earth, for no one ever parts with it.

At last he came to that which we are all so firmly persuaded we possess, that no one ever prayed to have it given him—I mean common sense. There was a huge heap of it, as big as all the other things put together. It was like a clear, soft liquid, which easily evaporates if it is not kept tightly corked, and was contained in bottles of various shapes and sizes, each one being labelled with the name of its owner. Astolfo noticed one which was much larger than the rest, and read on the label, "*Orlando's Wits.*" He saw also a great part of his own; but what made him marvel more than anything was the fact that many people whom he had believed to have plenty of sense were now shown to have little or none, the bottles marked with their names being nearly full. Some lose it through love, others in striving after honours; yet others, in seeking for riches by land and sea, or by putting their trust in great lords and princes, or in pursuing after follies of magic and sorcery, or gems or pictures, or anything else which a man values above others. There was a great quantity of the wits of philosophers and astrologers stored there, and also of those of poets. Astolfo took up his own, having received permission to do so, and put the flask to his nose; and it appears that his wits returned to their place right enough, for Turpin confesses that from thenceforth Astolfo lived very wisely indeed for a long time. But afterwards, it is true, he made one mistake which once more deprived him of his brains. Then he took up the large flask which contained Orlando's, and which was no light weight, and turned to depart. . . .

*Lodovico Ariosto.*

*THE POET TO HIS PATRON.*

O MASTER ANTHONY, I am in love  
 , With that fine doublet you've *not* given me !  
 I love, and wish it well as heartily  
 As 'twere the lady I call "Flower" and "Dove."  
 I look on't front and back—a perfect fit !  
 The more I look, the more I long for it.  
 It pleases me, inside and out,  
 And up and down. Oh ! heaven,  
 That you have only lent me it, not given !  
 Oh ! how I long for it, without a doubt !

When in the morn I see it on my back,  
 I always think that it must be my own ;  
 That cunning stitchery of herring-bone,  
 How great a marvel ! I am on the rack !  
 I shall do something desperate,—good lack !  
 And will not—cannot understand  
 I must restore it to your hand—  
 Oh ! how I long for it, without a doubt !

Oh ! Master Anthony, if you knew how  
 To set about it, you a faction-chief  
 Might be. Look at me in this doublet now,—  
 Am I not gallant ?—half a Mars, in brief ?  
 Make up your mind you want it not again,  
 And I will be your brave,  
 Your foot-page and your slave,  
 And walk, with sword on thigh, among your train !

O canzonet !  
 If thou dost fail this doublet for to get,  
 Thou well may'st say, I have  
 Been such a fool, I should be called a knave !

*Francesco Berni (1490?–1536).*

*BENVENUTO CELLINI OFFENDS THE POPE.*

WHEN I made this speech, there was present that gentleman of Cardinal Santa Fiore's with whom I had had words, and confirmed to the Pope all that had been told him! The Pope remained swelling with rage, and said nothing. Now I do *not* wish to fail in stating my reasons in a just and righteous manner. That gentleman of Santa Fiore's came to me one day, and brought me a little ring all tarnished with quicksilver, saying, "Burnish this ring for me, and make haste about it." I had a great many pieces of goldsmith's work in hand, with most valuable jewels waiting to be set, and hearing myself, moreover, ordered about with so much assurance by a man whom I had never seen or spoken to before, answered that I had not a burnisher by me just then, and that he had better go to another. He, without any reason in the world, told me that I was an ass. To these words of his I replied that he did not speak the truth, and that I was a man, on every account worth more than he; but that, if he bothered me, I would certainly kick harder than any ass. He went straight to the cardinal, and made out that I had all but murdered him. Two days after this I was shooting behind the palace at a wild pigeon, which had its nest in a hole, very high up; and that same pigeon I had seen shot at by a goldsmith named Giovan Francesco della Tacca, a Milanese, who had never hit it. On the day when I was shooting, it had become shy, and scarcely showed its head; and because this Giovan Francesco and I were rival marksmen, certain gentlemen and friends of mine who were in my workshop pointed it out to me, and said, "That is Tacca's pigeon which he has so often shot at. See, the poor bird has grown suspicious, and scarcely shows its head." I looked up, and said, "It shows quite enough for

me to hit it, if I only had time to take aim first." Those gentlemen said that the man himself who invented the fire-lock could never hit it. I replied I was willing to wager a pitcher of the best Greek wine that I would do so; and, taking aim, and shooting from the arm, without any support for my piece, I did what I had promised, without thinking of the cardinal or anybody else; nay, I had the less reason to do so, as I believed the cardinal to be very much my patron. Thus may the world see what divers ways Fortune takes, when she wishes to be the ruin of a man. To return to the Pope: he remained, all swollen and sulky, brooding over what he had heard. . . .

*Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1570).*

### *HE RESCUES A FOOL FROM DROWNING.*

WHEN we had passed the Mount Simplon aforesaid, we found a river near a place called Indevetro. This river was very wide and rather deep, and crossed by a little narrow bridge without a parapet. There was a hard frost that morning, and when I reached the bridge—for I was in front of the rest, and saw that it was very dangerous—I ordered my young men and the servants to dismount, and lead their horses by the bridle. Thus I passed the said bridge in safety, and went on talking with one of those two Frenchmen, who was a gentleman. The other was a notary, who had remained somewhat behind, and jeered at that gentleman and at me, saying that for fear of nothing at all we had preferred the discomfort of going on foot; to whom I turned, and seeing him on the middle of the bridge, prayed him to come softly, for that it was a very dangerous place. This man, who could not help showing his French nature, said to me in French that I was a man of little

courage, and that there was no danger at all. While he was saying these words he pricked his horse with the spur, through which means it suddenly slipped over the edge of the bridge, and fell close beside a large stone, turning over with its legs in the air; and as God very often shows compassion to fools, this beast, along with the other beast, his horse, fell into a great and deep hole, wherein both he and his horse went under water. As soon as I saw this I began to run, and with great difficulty leaped upon the stone aforesaid, and, holding on by it and hanging over the brink, I seized the edge of a gown which that man was wearing, and by that gown I pulled him up, while he was still under water; and because he had drunk a great quantity of water, and within a little would have been drowned, I, seeing him out of danger, told him I was rejoiced at having saved his life. Whereat he answered me that I had done nothing — that the most important thing were his parchments, which were worth much money. It seemed that he spoke thus in anger, all soaked through as he was, and muttering confusedly. At this I turned to the guides we had with us, and promised to pay them if they would help this beast. One of the guides valorously, and with great difficulty, set himself to do what he could, and fished up all the parchments, so that he lost nothing; the other would not put himself to any trouble to help him. . . .

*Benvenuto Cellini.*

*OPENING STANZAS OF "THE RAPE OF  
THE BUCKET."*



*A. Faldi*

FAIN would I sing that direful wrath which swayed  
Men's bosoms for a Bucket, spoil renowned !  
Stolen from Bologna, and in pomp displayed,  
By hostile Modenese with conquest crowned.  
Phœbus ! the conflicts and adventures dread  
Of horrid war assist me to resound.  
Inspiring God ! till I am grown acuter,  
Lend me thy helping hand, and be my tutor.

And thou, the nephew of the Pope of Rome !  
 And of the generous Carlo, son the second ;  
 Thou who hast wisdom in thy youthful bloom,  
 In tender years of high endowments reckoned ;  
 From studies deep, in which thou'rt quite at home,  
 If thou canst turn, by recreation beckoned,  
 List to my song ; see here the Grecian Helen  
 Transformed into a Bucket, war compelling !  
*Alessandro Tassoni (1565-1635).*

### *THE CALL TO ARMS.*

THEN like the Spartans lived the Modenese  
 Unfortified, without a parapet ;  
 So shallow were the fosses that with ease  
 Men might run in and out early or late ;  
 The Great Bell's toll now echoed on the breeze,  
 And up from bed jumped all the people straight ;  
 Summoned to arm, some bolted quick downstairs,  
 Some to the windows rushed—and some to prayers.  
 Some snatched a shoe and slipper, some in haste  
 Had only one leg stockinged, others again  
 In petticoats turned inside out were dressed,  
 Lovers exchanged their shirts ; some with disdain  
 Took frying-pans for shields, and forward pressed  
 With buckets on for helms, others were fain  
 To brandish hedge-bills, and in breast-plates bright  
 Ran swaggering to the Square, prepared for fight.  
 There had the Potta, ready at his post,  
 The City Standard valorously spread ;  
 Himself on horseback armed, and he could boast  
 Bright scarlet breeches, shoes too, lively red :



The Modenese, abridging, to their cost,  
 Potestà, wrote but Potta in its stead ;  
 And hence the Bolognese in joke had got a  
 Cognomen, and they called his Mayorship Potta !

Messer Lorenzo Scotti, sage and strong,  
 Was Potta then, and suits at law decided ;  
 Now foot and horsemen, a promiscuous throng,  
 All hurry to the Square, and these divided  
 Are posted at the gateways ; from among  
 The rest a chosen squadron is confided  
 To Rangon's son Gherardo,—to his hand  
 The Standard too is given and chief command.

*Alessandro Tassoni.*

### *THE ASSEMBLY OF THE GODS.*

O'ER rolling stars, from heavenly stalls advancing,  
 The coaches soon were seen, and a long train  
 Of mules with litters, horses fleet and prancing,  
 Their trappings all embroidery, nothing plain ;  
 And with fine liveries, in the sunbeams glancing,  
 More than a hundred servants, rather vain  
 Of handsome looks and of their stature tall,  
 Followed their masters to the Council Hall.

First came the Prince of Delos, Phoebus hight,  
 In a gay travelling carriage, fleetly drawn  
 By six smart Spanish chestnuts, shining bright,  
 Which with their tramping shook the aerial lawn ;  
 Red was his cloak, three-cocked his hat, and light  
 Around his neck the golden fleece was thrown ;  
 And twenty-four sweet damsels, nectar-sippers,  
 Were running near him in their pumps or slippers.

Pallas, with lovely but disdainful mien,  
 Came on a nag of Basignanian race ;



Tight round her leg, and gathered up, was seen  
 Her gown, half Greek, half Spanish ; o'er her face  
 Part of her hair hung loose, a natural screen,  
 Part was tied up, and with becoming grace :  
 A bunch of feathers on her head she wore,  
 And on her saddle-bow her falchion bore.

The Paphian Queen for her accommodation  
 Had two stage-coaches ; richly decorated  
 Was that wherein she sat in conversation  
 With Cupid and the Graces ; on them waited  
 Pages in habits suited to their station ;  
 The other coach with courtiers gay was freighted,  
 The chamberlain and tutor debonnair,  
 And the chief cook, Dan Bacon, too was there.

But Ceres and the God of Wine appeared  
 At once, conversing ; and the God of Ocean  
 Upon a dolphin's back his form upreared,

Floating through waves of air with graceful motion ;  
Naked, all sea-weed, and with mud besmeared ;

For whom his mother Rhea feels emotion,  
Reproaching his proud brother,<sup>1</sup> when she meets him,  
Because so like a fisherman he treats him.

Diana, the sweet virgin, was not there ;

She had risen early, and o'er woodland green  
Had gone to wash her clothes in fountain fair

Upon the Tuscan shore—romantic scene.  
And not returning till the northern star

Had rolled through dusky air and lost its sheen,  
Her mother made excuses, quite provoking,  
Knitting, at the same time, a worsted stocking.

Juno-Lucina did not go—and why ?

She anxious wished to wash her sacred head.  
Menippus, Jove's chief taster, standing by,

For the disastrous Fates excuses made.  
They had much tow to spin, and lint to dry,

And they were also busy baking bread.  
The cellarman, Silenus, kept away,  
To water the domestics' wine that day.

. . . . .



<sup>1</sup> Jupiter.

On starry benches sit the famous warriors  
Of the immortal kingdom, in a ring ;  
Now drums and cymbals, echoing to the barriers,  
Announce the coming of the gorgeous king ;  
A hundred pages, valets, napkin-carriers  
Attend, and their peculiar offerings bring.  
And after them, armed with his club so hard,  
Alcides, captain of the city guard.

And as the madness which his brain affected  
Was not quite cured, officiously he strode,  
And swung aloft his club, and blows directed  
Along the crowd to clear the royal road.  
Like drunken Swiss he looked, and seemed connected  
With ruffians low who hire themselves abroad  
On festal days, before the Pope to bluster,  
Breaking of arms and skull-caps in a fluster.

With Jove's broad hat and spectacles arrived  
The light-heeled Mercury ; in his hand he bore  
A sack, in which, of other means deprived,  
He damned poor mortals' prayers, some million score ;  
Those he disposed in vessels, well contrived,  
Which graced his father's cabinet of yore ;  
And, wont attention to all claims to pay,  
He regularly signed them twice a day.

Then Jove himself, in royal habit dressed,  
With starry diadem upon his head,  
And o'er his shoulders an imperial vest,  
Worn upon holidays.—The king displayed  
A sceptre, pastoral shape, with hooked crest ;  
In a rich jacket too was he arrayed,  
Given by the inhabitants of Sericane,  
And Ganymede held up his splendid train.

*Alessandro Tassoni.*

*PRAISES OF THE WINE OF MONTE-  
PULCIANO.*



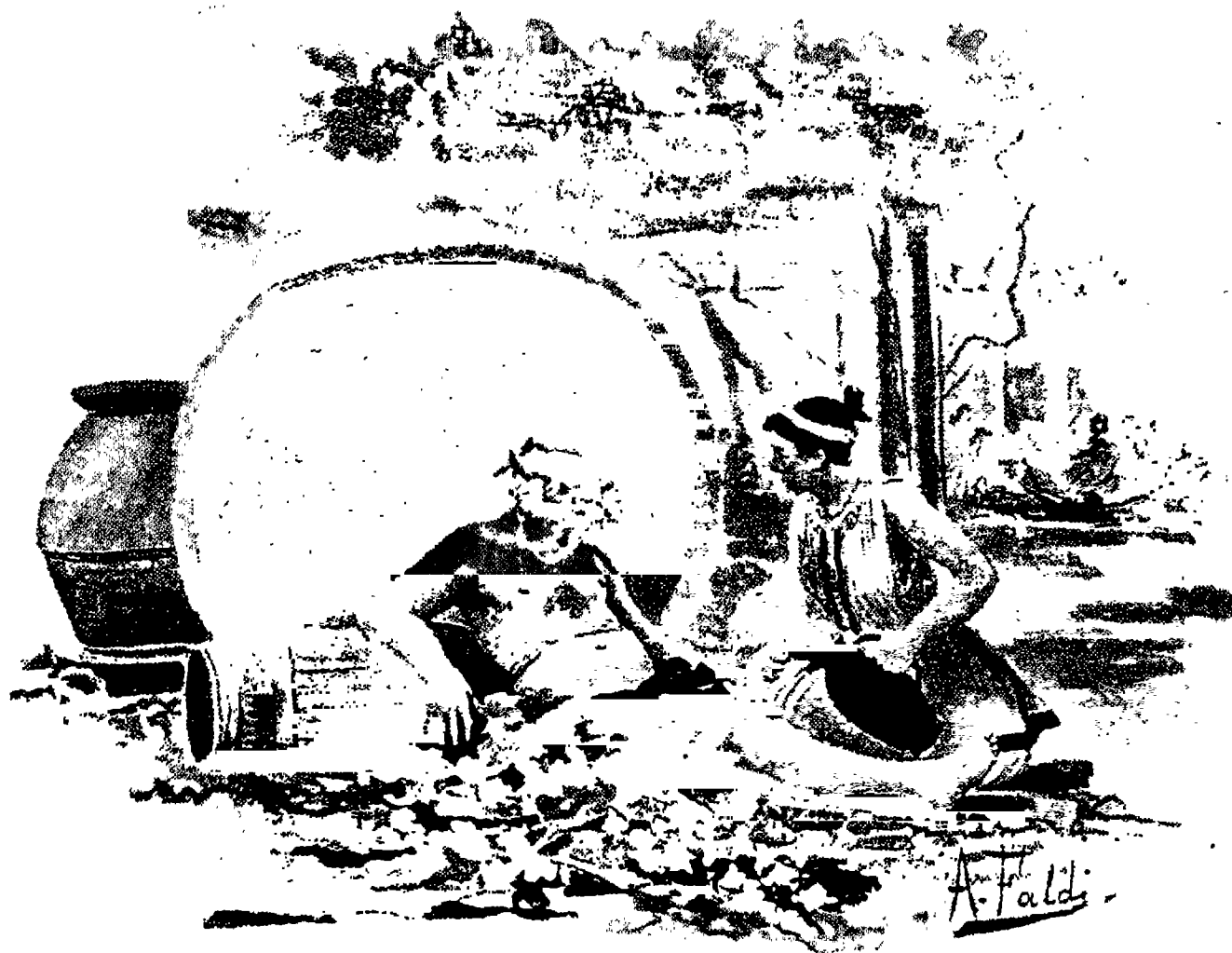
O H ! how widely wandereth he  
Who, in the search of verity,  
Keeps aloof from glorious wine !  
Lo ! the knowledge it bringeth to me.  
For Barbarossa, this wine so bright,  
With its rich red look and its strawberry  
light,  
So invites me  
And so delights me,  
I should infallibly quench my inside  
with it,  
Had not Hippocrates  
And old Andromachus  
Strictly forbidden it  
And loudly chidden it,  
So many stomachs have sickened and  
died with it.

Yet discordant as it is,  
Two good biggins will not come amiss ;

Because I know, while I'm drinking them down,  
What is the finish and what is the crown.  
A cup of good Corsican  
Does it at once ;  
Or a cup of old Spanish  
Is next for the nonce :  
Quackish resources are things for a dunce.  
Cups of chocolate,  
Ay, or tea,  
Are not medicines  
Made for me.  
I would sooner take to poison,  
Than a single cup set eyes on  
Of that bitter and guilty stuff ye  
Talk of by the name of coffee.  
Let the Arabs and the Turks  
Count it 'mongst their cruel works :  
Foe of mankind black and turbid,  
Let the throats of slaves absorb it.  
Down in Tartarus,  
Down in Erebus,  
'Twas the detestable Fifty invented it ;  
The Furies then took it,  
To grind and to cook it,  
And to Proserpine all these presented it.  
If the Mussulman in Asia  
Doats on a beverage so unseemly,  
I differ with the man extremely.

There's a squalid thing called beer :—  
The man whose lips that thing comes near  
Swiftly dies, or falling foolish,  
Grows, at forty, old and owlsh.  
She that in the ground would hide her,  
Let her take to English cider :

He **who'd** have his death come quicker,  
 Any **other** Northern liquor.  
 Those Norwegians and those Laps  
 Have extraordinary taps :  
 Those Laps especially have strange fancies :  
 To **see** them drink,  
 I verily think  
 Would make me lose my senses.



But a **truce** to such vile subjects  
 With **their** impious, shocking objects,  
 Let me **purify** my mouth  
 In an **holy** cup o' the south :  
 In a **golden** pitcher let me  
 Head **and** ears for comfort get me,  
 And **drink** of the vine of the wine benign  
 That **sparkles** warm in Sansovine ;

Or of that vermillion charmer  
And heart-warmer,  
Which brought up in Tregonzano  
And on stony Giggiano,<sup>1</sup>  
Blooms so bright and lifts the head so  
Of the toasters of Arezzo.

*Francesco Redi (1626–1696).*

*FROM A LETTER TO PIER MARIA BALDI.*

BUFFALMACCO was a famous painter in his day; and in my judgment—and I am not altogether a fool in these matters—he still deserves to be preferred to Titian and the divine Michael Angelo—and one can go no further than that. If you wish, Signor Baldi, to know the reasons and motives of this judgment of mine, do not expect me to say that Buffalmacco was so skilled and perfect a master as to be able to teach the art of painting in its greatest refinements to an ape which the Bishop of Arezzo kept for his pastime; but I shall certainly tell you that Buffalmacco was he who discovered that noble and ever-to-be-remembered and ever-to-be-praised invention of tempering colours, not with water from the well, but with the most brilliant white wine that could ever be produced by the best shoots of the most renowned vines on the Florentine hills. Before Buffalmacco had made this discovery, he used to execute paintings which—you may rely upon it—were exactly like your own face; that is to say, pale, washed-out, and mouldy-looking; and in many of them I fancy I recognise my own portrait, with a face like a mummy, thin, dry, hollow-cheeked, worn to a shadow, and coloured with a certain hue like that of bread-crust or a quince baked in the oven, and so melancholy as to make people weep who were

<sup>1</sup> See note at end of volume.





"PULCINELLA."

quite ready to laugh. But when this great master of all masters began to use wine with his colours—

“His painted saints on the wall he discloses  
With fresh, blooming faces, all milk and roses!”

and they were all the right sort of folk—jovial, cheerful, wholesome, and good-tempered, so that people talked about them even as far as the gates of Paris, and the ladies of Faenza—certain knowing nuns, whose convent stood where the lower fort is now—had more faith in Buffalmacco than in all the Apelleses and Protogeneses who were in credit with the ancient Greeks. Now, what do I mean by all this screed of nonsense? I mean to draw the conclusion, that since you are so kind as to draw the illustrations to that book of mine, you will most assuredly come to grief unless you mix your colours with *Vernaccia* or some other good wine, and you will do no work that is worth looking at. And since it is not right that you should be at any expense in consequence of this work of mine, I send you a sample of white wine of Syracuse, with other samples of wine given me by his Serene Highness the Grand Duke; with which, if you mix your colours, you will not only give a good appearance to your pictures, but also get back your former healthy looks, in spite of those disgusting messes which you are made to swallow, every morning, by those two physicians, your friends. Try this new prescription, and you will soon be well.

*Francesco Redi.*

### PULCINELLA'S DUEL.

COLBRAND AND PULCINELLA (*both armed*).

*Col.* I am beside myself with joy; the master evidently thinks something of me; he has given me a nag! Now we shall see whether or no it is possible for an idiot of a rustic

to take Nanon from me. I'll ornament his face for him! If he is a man of his word, and keeps his appointment, woe to him!

*Pul.* Perdition! Who is here?

*Col.* If he comes——! (*Threatens him.*)

*Pul.* After all, I am a man—I remember the saying; for necessity teaches one many things.

*Col.* Oh! bravo! You have kept your word, and come in time.

*Pul.* Listen, Colbrand. If you want to fight, I am quite ready; but you must tell me, first, how long you have learnt fencing.

*Col.* What does that matter?

*Pul.* It matters to me.

*Col.* Five years.

*Pul.* I have been learning for ten. I don't want to take a mean advantage of you; go and take lessons five years more, and then come, and I'll give you satisfaction.

*Col.* Ah! you coward!

*Pul.* Ah! get out of the way!

*Col.* You shall not go away—you are caught—one of us has to remain here.

*Pul.* Very well, you remain, and I will go away.

*Col.* You pretend not to understand me. I mean that one of us has to remain here dead.

*Pul.* Oh! dead?

*Col.* Certainly.

*Pul.* Well, do you remain dead, and then we shall be all right.

*Col.* Who is to kill me?

*Pul.* I, if you wish.

*Col.* No, I do not wish. I shall defend myself to the utmost.

*Pul.* Come, let's say no more about it. Is it worth while to kill a man for the sake of a woman?

*Col.* These excuses will not serve you—draw your sword, or I will strike.

*Pul. (aside).* Oh! the devil! I'm dead. *(Aloud.)* Listen to me. The first time I girt on my sword I made a vow that it should never be stained with blood.

*Col.* You ass in clothes! You shall either give up Nanon to me, or I will rid the world of you.

*Pul.* Listen to me. You have a quarrel with me out of jealousy, because I have taken your sweetheart from you; but I have none with you—on the contrary, I am sorry for you; it would be too bad to kill you, after having made a fool of you.

*Col.* I am not listening to you. Come, this blade shall be your answer.

*Pul.* I have no quarrel with you.

*Col.* What am I to do, then?

*Pul.* Call me some vile names, then I shall get angry, and come to blows with you.

*Col.* Very well. You are a scoundrel, a ruffian, a cowardly knave.

*Pul.* Supposing that what you say is the truth, what reason have I to be angry?

*Col.* You are a dissolute wretch, the son of vile parents.

*Pul.* I think you must be a gipsy to know this. You are telling me nothing but the truth.

*Col.* In this way we shall do nothing.

*Pul.* But if what you say is true?

*Col. (aside).* Oh! the base wretch! Come on, will you?

*Pul.* Softly, softly. *(Aside.)* I see no one coming. Tell me things that are not true, and then I shall fire up like any Englishman. I know what my nature is.

*Col.* Very well, you are a gentleman.

*Pul.* A gentleman! I! and when was I ever that?

*Col.* Yes, a gentleman—a valiant and honourable gentleman.

*Pul.* And I am to fight with a pig—a dirty blackguard like you?

*Col.* This to me! Power of the world! draw your sword this moment, or I'll strike.

*Pul.* Steady, steady. Wait a bit—don't you see I have to get it drawn.

*Col.* Well, if you do not draw it, I won't strike. I am waiting for you.

*Pul.* If I do not draw, you will not strike?

*Col.* No.

*Pul.* I am not going to draw for ten years to come at the very least. . . . Very well, come on. (*Draws his sword.*) Here I am, quite ready. How do you wish to have it?

*Col.* At the first blood.

*Pul.* Very well. Ah! ah! eh! (*He strikes at Colbrand, standing as far from him as he can, and crying out loudly.*)

*Col.* Do be quiet. Some one will come, and we shall be disturbed.

[Pulcinella makes more noise than ever, when *Logman* arrives on the scene, and demands an explanation of the quarrel. The presence of a third person revives Pulcinella's courage, and he loudly declares his intention of running Colbrand through and through till his person is like a sieve. He then falls to chaffing the pompous steward, who loses his temper, and finally dismisses him. Pulcinella, leaving the stage, asks, "Do you know why I am going?" and candidly adds, "because I am afraid." While Colbrand, seeing that he is well out of the way, remarks to Logman, "For your sake I will remain quiet—but, another time . . ." leaving the terrible threat incomplete.]

*Francesco Cerlone (c. 1750–1800).*

*A BERGAMASC PETER PEEBLES.*

A CERTAIN Bergamasc, an honest fellow, and ignorant as a log, came up here some years ago, with five or six thousand scudi in cash. He at once encountered certain astute rustics, who, making him believe that black was white, and dazzling him with the most extraordinary promises, soon succeeded in borrowing the greater part of his money. Now, alleging as excuses, sometimes storms, sometimes drought, and then again thunder and lightning, they have managed so to spin out matters that the poor man cannot get back a farthing of his money to this day. Do not imagine, however, that this difficulty causes him any sorrow; on the contrary, it gives him the greatest delight in the world, for it has opened up to him the possibility of unlimited law-suits—a prospect as dear to his heart as sugar to flies. And, not content with civil suits, he worried so long at his debtors that, at last, one of them—better at paying up than the rest—attempted to pay his whole debt at a blow, which he did with a scythe, on the top of the creditor's head. It was well for him that the blow did not reach the neck, at which it was aimed, and which it would have cut through like a stalk of clover; but glanced off on the forehead, only wounding the skin. You never saw greater joy than he experienced when he felt the blood running down his face, and made sure of it by putting up his hand. I think he would have died of sheer satisfaction, had his delight not been tempered by the disappointed reflection that, after all, he had not had his skull broken. He went off at once to find me,—and, nearly frightening me out of my wits with his ensanguined countenance, shouted, “I am going. I am off to Venice this minute! Give me an introduction to an honest solicitor!” I, seeing the state he was in, thought he was wandering in his mind, and that,

instead of a solicitor, he meant to ask for a surgeon. But when I had heard what had happened, and understood what his intention was, I promised to do what he asked, and so far pacified him that he allowed the steward's wife to dress his head with a little white-of-egg and tow, and bandage it with a piece of rag. Then he insisted on telling me his story all over again, and how fortunate he was in having another plea to enter ;—he would not, he said, part with his broken head for several ducats—in fact, he was quite ready to pay his debtor a dozen ducats or so for the favour done him. Now, having got together all his documents, and, further, written out on a sheet of paper, in the Bergamasc dialect, the whole history of the quarrel—a curious and valuable manuscript—he is coming to Venice, to get legal advice about it, and be directed how to get back his own, by means of his broken head. Here he is, then, with his spurs on, like a fighting-cock, and I have charged him with this present letter to you ; so please to send him to some man with a conscience, who may try and help him get back his money, and also persuade him that he will do well to leave this part of the country—for it is ill jesting with our farmers, and if he tries it, he will soon find himself skinned. I recommend him to you most earnestly, because he is in the right,—because he is a good fellow by nature,—and because of his shocking ignorance. Before sending him to the solicitor, get him to tell you a little about his litigations. I promise you that you will hear words which all the commentators on the Pandects would never have discovered. Besides this, he begins to speak in a big bass voice which gradually rises and ends in a falsetto, so that his conversation is a species of music. His eloquence and arrangement of facts are something marvellous ; he will begin by telling you of his broken head, and his disputes with the farmers ; he will then go on to say that he has lent them money, and end up by telling you that he was from Bergamo. In short,

he begins with the death, and goes backwards till he gets to the christening. When you find him a lawyer, be sure, in the first place, to choose one who understands stories told upside down. Help him all you can, and let me know what you think of him when you see him. Good-bye.

*Gasparo Gozzi* (1713-1786).

### HOW TO SUCCEED IN LITERATURE.

IN those old-fashioned times, when people lived, so to speak, at haphazard, and when, if a man wished to gain a reputation for learning, he forgot himself and all he had and stuck to his books day and night—the ways of acquiring for one's self an honoured and illustrious name were very different from what they are now. But in those days the business was a long one, and the path to be trodden was steep and rugged; and few were those who reached the top of the mountain, where Learning sheds abroad her gifts and graces. In our own day, however, we have shortened the journey, and opened a level and easy road, wherein you may walk, as it were, on cotton, with no other trouble than that of elbowing back those rival competitors who are pressing forward too boldly, or firing a snap-shot at those who are spreading their wings too rapidly. If any young man wishes to get on quickly, and to be greatly honoured, let him lay up a good store of *mots* and jests against his rivals, and have his head so full of them that they may fall from his tongue in showers like hailstones; and let him utter them on every possible occasion, whether in or out of season does not matter. Let him remember, moreover, that it is not enough to speak ill of others, but that he must also speak well of himself, and remember that Horace and Ovid, both of them, said that neither time, nor fire, nor any other calamity could



destroy their works out of the world. If he cannot imitate those two writers in any other respect, let him do it in this. He should not spend much time and labour in composition, but dash off everything in hot haste; for the file and the foot-rule will spoil all the fire of his writing. Once upon a time the great art was to use art and yet conceal it; nowadays, in order to make no mistake in the using of it, it is considered the safest thing to have none at all. Those who are considered good authors he should leave alone, otherwise he may be accused of plagiarism; let him make capital of himself and his own brain, and fly wherever the latter is disposed to carry him. These are the general principles through following which I promise eternal fame to the young man in question. It is true that in this way a man does not leave a great literary reputation behind him after his death;—but what matters this last vanity, or the glory of an epitaph either?

*Gasparo Gozzi.*

### *A FABLE.*

JOVE, having one day drank more nectar than usual, and being in a pleasant humour, the fancy took him to make some present to mankind. And having called Momus, he gave him what he had decided upon, packed in a portmanteau, and sent him down to the earth. “Oh!” cried Momus (when he arrived in a chariot) to the human race, “Oh! truly blessed generation. Behold how Jove, liberal of his benefits towards you, opens his generous hand! Come, hasten, receive! Never complain again that he has made you short-sighted. His gift quite compensates you for this defect.” So saying, he unfastened the portmanteau, and emptied out of it an enormous heap of spectacles. Behold, then, the whole of mankind busy picking them up; every man has his pair—all are content, and thank Jove for having

acquired so excellent an aid to their eyesight. But the spectacles caused them to see things under a deceitful appearance. To one man a thing seems blue, while another sees it yellow; one thinks it is white, and another black, so that to every one it appears different. But what of that? Every individual was delighted with his pair, and quite taken up with it, and insisted on its being the best. My dear friends, we are the heirs of these people, and the spectacles have fallen to our lot. Some see things one way, and some another, and every one thinks he is right.

*Gasparo Gozzi.*

## KING TEODORO AND HIS CREDITORS.

FROM THE COMIC OPERA, "IL RE TEODORO."

[About 1730, the Corsicans rose in rebellion against the Genoese, who had long been masters of the island; and a German baron of the name of Theodor von Neuhoff, who landed with supplies for the insurgents, received the title of king. Being obliged to leave in order to raise additional forces, he was arrested for debt. Casti's opera is founded on this circumstance, and represents him as coming to Venice, under a feigned name, with his companion Gafforio, in desperate straits for money.]

*Gafforio.* Cast away grief, my king!—this sorrow,  
Surely, is most unworthy thee!

*Teodoro.* I've neither kingdom nor coin,—and borrow  
I cannot—a monarch who would be?

*Gaff.* Ah! remember the great Darius,  
Marius, and Themistocles—  
And many a worthy man and pious,—  
Surely the fate of such as these,  
Heroes of every age and nation,  
Ought to be a consolation.

*Teod.* All these stories, my son, I know,  
 Having read history, like yourself,  
 But the want that presses so  
 Is not history now, but pelf.

*[Achmet, Sultan of Turkey, dethroned and banished, but plentifully supplied with funds, takes up his quarters at the same hotel as Theodore. The latter's creditors, hearing he is at Venice, demand his arrest, and he is imprisoned.]*

*Teod.* Then this catacomb  
 Is the tomb  
 Of all my vast design ?  
 Is this the kingdom, this the throne,  
 Are these the glorious realms unknown,  
 I thought should yet be mine ?

*Belisa* With your passion for reigning,  
*(his sister).* I've told you, my brother,  
 One day or another  
 To gaol you would go !

*Gaff.* Keep courage, O Leader,  
 For Regulus olden  
 And Bajazet, Soldan,  
 Had worse fates, you know !

*Teod.* Have done, once for all,  
 With your musty old stories,  
 Your heroes and glories,—  
 Don't bother me so !

*[All Theodore's friends come to take leave of him, and he adjures them:]*

*All.* Oh ! go, and do not grieve me !  
 For pity's sake be still.  
 That which attracts the human heart,  
 How vain and frail it seems to be !

*Teod.* Good heavens ! how very weary,  
How infinitely dreary,  
Are good and virtuous people  
That preach morality !

*Gaff.* In order to avenging  
Your wrongs and impositions,  
At all the courts of Europe  
I will present petitions.

*Achmet.* For Theodore the banished  
We'll take up a collection,  
And I shall be most happy,  
Contributing my fraction.

*Taddeo* As long as, in this city,  
*(landlord).* In prison, sir, you stay,  
I shall be glad to send you  
Your dinner every day !

*Belisa.* Cheer up, O my brother !  
The laws of this day  
Are always in favour  
Of him who can't pay !  
As soon as they see  
That you have not a groat  
They must set you free,  
If they wish it, or not !

*All.* Take comfort, farewell !—  
Never anything stable  
In this world did dwell !

*Teod.* In peace kindly leave me,  
I've told you before—  
I've had enough preaching,  
And wish for no more !

*THE POET PROMISES TO  
PAY HIS CREDITOR—  
WHEN HE HAS MONEY.*



THOU askest me  
for money (while  
I've none),  
And lovest time in  
vain which thou  
might'st save :

If thou an "*I pro-  
mise to pay*" dost  
crave,

I'll make no bones  
at all to give thee  
one :

I neither grant thee  
nor refuse the  
boon ;

Since what one  
never had one  
never gave ;

I promise that I'll  
pay thee when I  
have ;

And thou'rt con-  
tent with my  
goodwill there-  
on.

Then let's have  
peace, nor let me  
thus be bored

For those three  
groats a hundred  
times a day :

When got, I'll give  
them of my own  
accord.

Why wilt thou thus torment and wear me out ?  
Why worry a poor devil in this way ?  
Canst thou not say, "Where nothing is—there's nought."

*The Poet laments the good old times previous to the existence  
of Duns, Bailiffs, Writs, and I.O.U.'s.*

OH! blissful days, what time Queen Bertha spun !<sup>1</sup>  
Most fortunate and highly favoured season !  
That age hight anciently the golden one,  
No doubt because so happy was the reason :  
No I.O.U.'s were then, nor writs, to dun,  
Nor frequent law-suits, such as now, with fees on ;  
Nor people then were summoned, should they run  
In debt, nor lost their liberty in prison.  
But times are changed—not now what once they were ;  
And woe to that poor devil who gets in debt !  
For he must go to gaol and perish there !  
And should his dun not be so hard on, yet  
He plagues him night and day, wherever met.  
As thou dost me—pursuing me everywhere !

*He complains that his Creditor uses him worse than  
would a Pirate.*

ALGIERS and Tunis, Tripoli, Salé,  
Places that lie where are the days most hot,  
So brute a race of men perhaps have not,  
As brutal as my creditor with me :  
This man not born like other men could be :  
But in ill-will and rancorousness begot,  
By one that ne'er sucked mercy's milk, I wot,  
And daily made him bad examples see.  
The Barbary Pirate, when he makes a slave,

<sup>1</sup> An Italian expression for the Golden Age.

Robs him of cash that he may find on one,  
 But does not want his money when he has none:  
 But, using me more cruelly than a pirate,  
 My dun don't care whether or not I have;  
 When I've no money, still he doth require it.

*He declares his Dun to be ubiquitous in pursuit of him.*

PHILOSOPHERS hold that if in one place  
 One body is, another is elsewhere;  
 Two bodies being quite separate, in no case  
 A single one can be both here and there.  
 Moreo'er of that should any person care  
 To know the physical reason, 'tis to trace . . .  
 But, not to wait the causes to deduce,  
 Suffice we know the fact, as on its face.  
 Yet if the thing were otherwise than so—  
 (To cite a case in point) I should pronounce  
 One body may be here and there at once;  
 For, by the body o' me! now there as well,  
 And now I find thee here, where'er I go:  
 But how the devil thou dost, I cannot tell.

*Gio. Battista Casti.*

### *DIDYMUS, THE CLERIC,<sup>1</sup> ON THE ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES.*

**H**E thought that all the schools of Italy were full,  
 either of mathematicians, who could understand one  
 another without speaking; or of grammarians, who shouted

<sup>1</sup> *Didimo Chièrico* is a fictitious character, upon whom Foscolo has fathered most of his opinions and experiences, in a curious piece of writing purporting to be a sketch of Didimo and an account of his works. It contains numerous references to Sterne, by whom Foscolo was greatly influenced.

themselves hoarse lecturing on the art of eloquence, yet could not make any living soul understand what they said ; or of poets, who did their best to deafen those who did not listen to them, and were loud in welcoming every new tyrant who gained power over their nation. This is the reason why, as troublesome fools, they were exiled—with more justice than any other class—by Socrates, who, according to our author, was endowed with the spirit of prophecy—especially as regards the things which are taking place in our own day.

*Ugo Foscolo* (1778–1827).

### *THE FIRST HOUR AND THE SUN.*

*First Hour.* Good morning, your Excellency.

*Sun.* Yes, or rather good night.

*First Hour.* The horses are ready.

*Sun.* Very good.

*First Hour.* The morning star has been out some time.

*Sun.* Very good—let her come or go as it suits her.

*First Hour.* What does your Excellency mean ?

*Sun.* I mean that I want you to leave me alone.

*First Hour.* But, your Excellency, the night has already lasted so long that it cannot last any longer,—and if we were to wait, you see, your Excellency, it might give rise to some disorder.

*Sun.* Let come of it what will—I shall not move.

*First Hour.* Oh! your Excellency, what is this? don't you feel well?

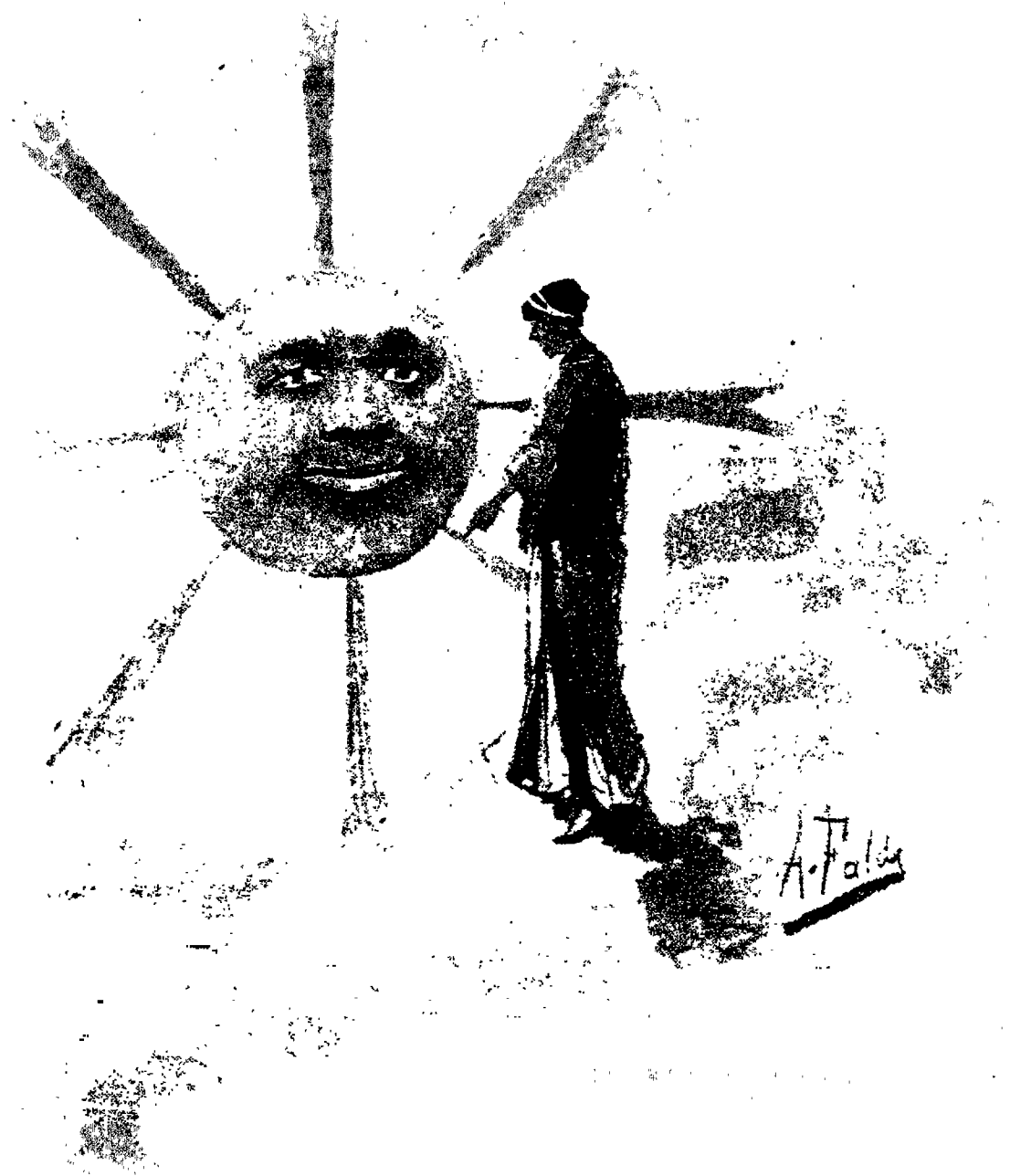
*Sun.* No, no—I don't feel anything, except that I don't want to move, so you may go about your business.

*First Hour.* How can I go, if you do not come?—for I am the first hour of the day. And how can there be any day at all if your Excellency does not deign to come out as usual?

*Sun.* If you are not the first hour of the day, you can be the first hour of the night ; or else the night hours can go



on double duty, and you and your companions may take it easy. Because—I tell you what it is: I am tired of this continual going round and round in order to give light to a few wretched little animals living on a handful of mud, so small that I, though I have pretty good sight, cannot manage to



see it. So this night I have made up my mind that I can't be bothered any more ; and if men want light, let them keep their fires burning, or provide it in some other way.

*First Hour.* But how does your Excellency expect the poor wretches to manage it? And then it will be an enormous expense for them to keep up their lamps and provide candles

enough to burn all day long. If they had already discovered that kind of air which will burn, and could use it to light up their streets, and rooms, and shops, and cellars, and everything else—and all at a small expense—why, then I should say that the thing was not so bad. But the fact is, that it will be three hundred years, more or less, till men find out that expedient; and in the meantime they will get to the end of all the oil, and wax, and pitch, and tallow, and have nothing more to burn.

*Sun.* Let them go and catch fireflies, or those little worms which shine in the dark.

*First Hour.* And how will they provide against the cold?—for without the help they have had from you the wood of all the forests will never be enough to warm them. Besides which they will also die of hunger; for the earth will no longer yield its fruits. And so, at the end of a few years, the race of those poor animals will be entirely lost. They will crawl about for a time, groping in the dark after something to eat and warm themselves at; and, in the end, when the last spark of fire has died out, and they have eaten everything that a human being could possibly swallow, they will all die in the dark, frozen hard like bits of rock crystal.

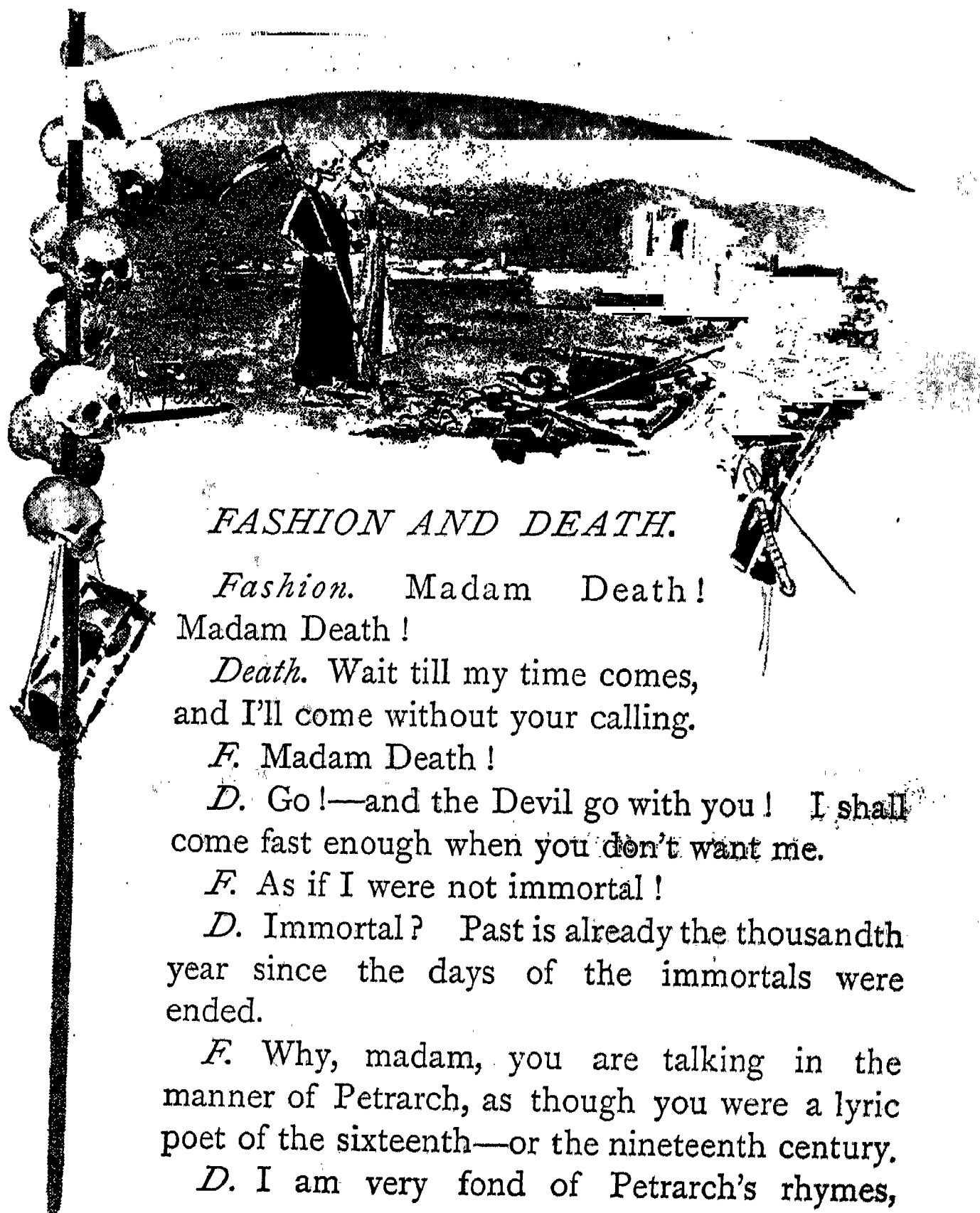
*Sun.* And if they do, what business is that of mine? Am I the nurse of the human race?—or perhaps their cook, who has to provide and prepare their food for them? What is it to me that a certain small quantity of invisible animalcules, thousands of miles distant from me, cannot see, or bear the cold, without my light? Besides, even though it were my duty to serve as stove or hearth, so to speak, to this human family, it is surely reasonable that, if the family want to warm themselves, they should come and stand round the stove—not that the stove should walk round the house. And so, if the earth has need of my presence, let her bestir herself, and see that she gets it; for, as far as I am concerned, I want nothing of her, and there is no reason why I should go after her.

*First Hour.* Your Excellency means, if I understand aright, that what you did formerly is now to be done by the Earth.

*Sun.* Yes, now—and henceforward for ever.

*Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837).*

NOTE.—This dialogue is supposed to take place at the date of Galileo's discovery of the real relations of the Solar System.



### *FASHION AND DEATH.*

*Fashion.* Madam Death!  
Madam Death!

*Death.* Wait till my time comes,  
and I'll come without your calling.

*F.* Madam Death!

*D.* Go!—and the Devil go with you! I shall  
come fast enough when you don't want me.

*F.* As if I were not immortal!

*D.* Immortal? Past is already the thousandth  
year since the days of the immortals were  
ended.

*F.* Why, madam, you are talking in the  
manner of Petrarch, as though you were a lyric  
poet of the sixteenth—or the nineteenth century.

*D.* I am very fond of Petrarch's rhymes,

because there is my *Triumph* among them, and the rest of them are nearly all about me too. But, anyway, get out of my sight at once.

*F.* Come—for the love you bear to the seven deadly sins, stop a little, and look at me.

*D.* I am looking at you.

*F.* Don't you know me?

*D.* You ought to know that my sight is not good, and that I cannot use spectacles, because the English do not make any that would serve me—and even though they made them, I have no nose to put them on.

*F.* I am Fashion, your sister.

*D.* My sister?

*F.* Yes—don't you remember that we are both daughters of Decadence?

*D.* What should I remember, whose business it is to destroy all memory?

*F.* But I do, and I know that we are both equally busy, continually undoing and changing the things of this world, although you set about this task in one way, and I in another.

*D.* If you are not talking to your own thoughts, or to some person whom you have inside your throat, do raise your voice a little, and pronounce your words more clearly; for if you go on mumbling between your teeth with that thin cobweb of a voice of yours, I shall take till to-morrow to hear you. My hearing, as you know, is no better than my sight.

*F.* Although it is not exactly usual,—and in France people do not speak in order to be heard,—yet, as we are sisters, and can drop ceremony between ourselves, I will speak as you wish. I say that the nature and custom of both of us is continually to ruin the world; but you, from the beginning, have thrown yourself on the person and the blood, whereas I mostly content myself with beards, hair, clothes, furniture, palaces, and such-like. It is true that I have not failed to carry on certain games which may well be

compared to yours—as, for instance, piercing holes in ears, lips, or noses,—burning the flesh of men with red-hot irons, with which I make them mark themselves for the sake of beauty,—forming the heads of babies by means of bandages and other contrivances, so that all the people in a country may have heads of the same shape, as I have done in Africa and in America,—laming people with narrow shoes,—choking the breath out of them, and making their eyes start out of their heads with the tightness of their stays,—and a hundred other things of the same kind. Not only so, but, generally speaking, I persuade and force all people of any position to bear unending fatigue and discomfort, every day of their lives—oftentimes pain and torture; and some of them will even die gloriously for the love they bear to me. I say nothing of the headaches, chills, colds of every kind,—daily, tertian, and quartan fevers, which men get through obeying me,—submitting to shiver with cold and be suffocated with heat, as I please,—to cover their bodies with woollen stuff, and their chests with linen, and do everything in the way I tell them, even though it be to their own hurt.

*D.* Well,—I am quite willing to believe that you are my sister, and, if you wish to have it so, I will consider it more certain than death—and you need not prove it out of the parish register. But if I stand still in this way, I turn faint; yet, if you have courage to run alongside of me, take care not to kill yourself, as I go at a great pace. If you can run you can tell me all you have to say as we go along; if not, I must leave you with a salutation, and promise you, in consideration of our relationship, to leave you all my property when I die.

*F.* If we had to run a race together, I don't know which of us would win; for if you run, I do more than gallop. And as for standing still in one place,—if in turns you faint, it kills me. So then, let us run together, and, as you say, speak of our affairs as we go.

*D.* Let it be so. Since, then, you are my sister, it would be the right thing if you could help me somehow or other in my business.

*F.* I have already done so, more than you think. In the first place, though I am continually destroying or changing all other customs, I have never in any place induced people to leave off dying; and for this reason, you see, the practice has universally remained in force from the beginning of the world up to the present day.

*D.* It is a mighty miracle that you should not have done what you cannot do.

*F.* What I cannot do? You do not seem to know the power of fashion.

*D.* Well, well—it will be time to talk about this when the fashion of not dying has come in. But meanwhile, I should like you, as a good sister, to help me to obtain the contrary result more easily and quickly than I have hitherto done.

*F.* I have already told you of some of my work which is very profitable to you. But that is a trifle in comparison with what I am going to tell you. For your sake I have gradually—especially in the later times—caused people to disuse and forget the exercises which are beneficial to health, and brought in other customs which weaken the body and shorten life. Besides which, I have introduced into the world such rules and customs, that life itself, as well for the body as the soul, is rather dead than alive, so that this century may truly be called the Age of Death. . . . Besides, whereas formerly you used to be hated and abused, nowadays, thanks to me, things have reached such a pass, that whoever has any intellect at all values and praises you, preferring you above life, and turns his eyes to you as to his greatest hope. Finally, seeing that many had made their boast of living after death in the memories of their fellow-men, . . . I have abolished this habit of seeking after immortality, and of conferring it in case there should

be any who deserved it. . . . These things, which are neither few nor small, I have, up to now, accomplished for the love of you, wishing to increase your state and power on earth, as has, in fact, been the case. I am disposed to do as much as this, and more, every day, and it was with this intention I set out to seek you; and I think it would be well that, for the future, we should remain together. Thus we could lay our plans better than formerly, and also carry them out more effectually.

*D.* You speak truly; and I am quite willing we should do so.

*Giacomo Leopardi.*

### *THE POET ON TRAMP.*

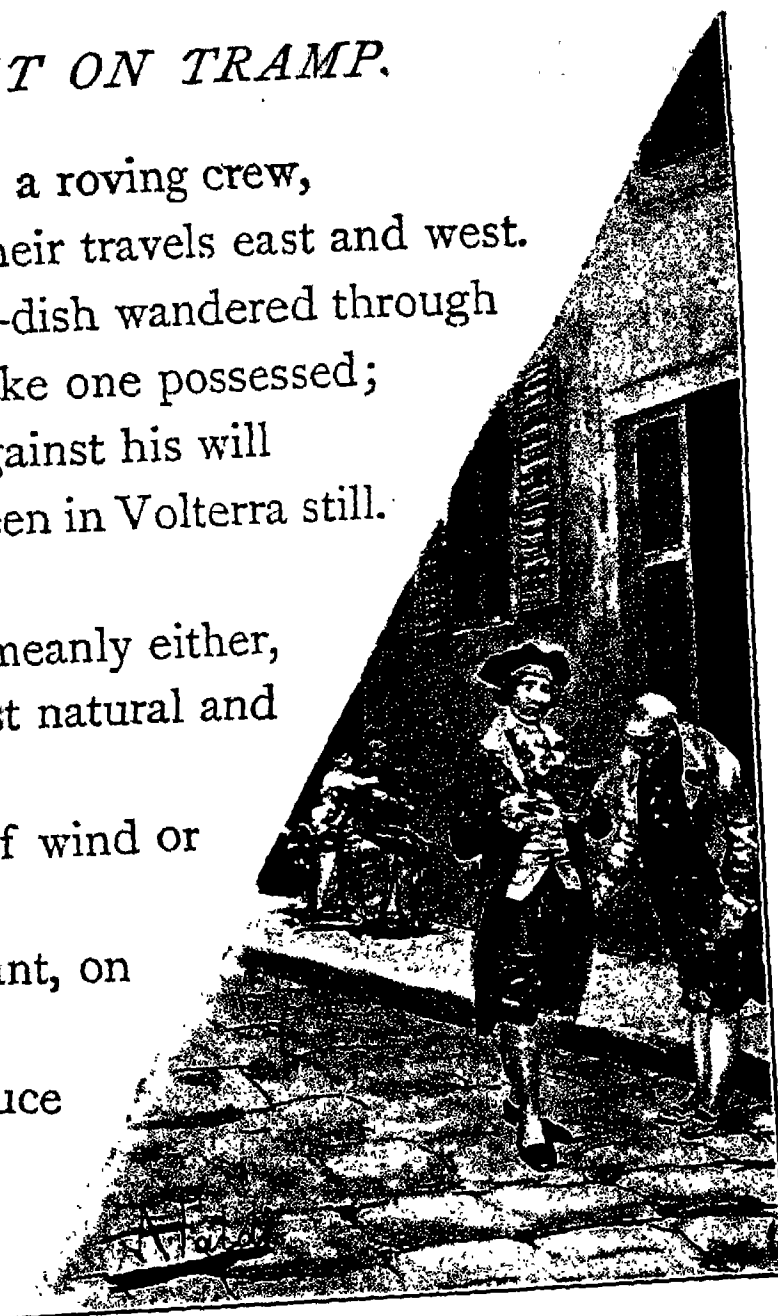
**P**OETS have ever been a roving crew,  
And honoured in their travels east and west.  
Old Homer with his alms-dish wandered through  
Ionia—Tasso ranged like one possessed;  
And Ovid was escorted 'gainst his will  
To a place whose like 's seen in Volterra still.

I travel too, and not so meanly either,  
In a way which is most natural and  
meet,—

I do not take account of wind or  
weather,

But go, as nature meant, on  
my own feet,

Step after step, in douce  
and measured wise  
Taking, for pastime and  
for exercise.



I am not taken for a vagabond,  
Nor do the folk call me a lackpenny ;  
I pass for one who roves the world around,  
And goes afoot the better for to see.  
As Cræsus, it is true, I am not prized,  
But as a gentleman am recognised.

For my part, I do everything I may  
To merit this respect, with all my might—  
With step most leisurely I take my way.  
To show I'm walking for my own delight,  
And as a proof that I have coin to spend,  
I always ask, "Where's the best inn, my friend?"

Sometimes most like a botanist I go,  
Keenly observing plants, with head bent down—  
Pick flowers, or make pretence of doing so,  
And pocket pebbles with a sapient frown.  
Or sometimes, like a painter, I stand still  
And gaze for half-an-hour on vale and hill.

When nearing some small village I retire  
Into a ditch, or else behind a mound,  
To sit and cool myself, if I perspire,  
Awhile—and dust my hat, and look around  
For a fresh spring in some convenient place,  
To smarten up, and wash my hands and face.

As I pass on, with slow and easy pace,  
"A gentleman from town," the people say,  
"Most likely lodging in some neighbouring place,  
And sauntering forth t' enjoy this summer day ;"  
Ploughman and labourer lift their hats and stare,  
And take me for the Worshipful the Mayor.



Entering the inn in unembarrassed wise,  
I say, "I think I'll stay awhile," and then  
To find my horse they cast inquiring eyes ;  
"They wanted me to take one," I explain,  
"But not to walk a bit were sin, I say,  
In such fine weather as we have to-day."

And that they may not think that I am tired,  
I stamp about the kitchen till it shakes.  
"How well I feel!" I shout like one inspired,—  
"A little exercise such difference makes!"  
They ask me where I stay—'tis not amiss  
If I reply, "Within a walk of this!"

And, after all, Dame Nature legs has given  
For to support the person, more or less,  
And carry us to all the airts of heaven,—  
Not to be dangled in mere idleness ;  
So any gentleman may use this limb,  
Nor cause his ancestors to blush for him.

[But a walking-tour is not without its inconveniences.  
The poet dwells on the discomforts of heat, cold weather,  
and muddy roads.]

Then, if perchance a carriage passes by,  
Me the postillion eyes with savage mind,  
And backward cracks his whip, suspecting I,  
To steal a ride, am getting up behind.  
I look not like a knave, yet constantly  
The travellers on their luggage keep an eye.

I ask mine host o' the inn if there's a bed ;  
From head to foot he looks me coldly o'er,

Then turns his back, with haughtiness ill-bred,  
 And deigns no answer. I seem to be once more  
 In London, where the man in livery  
 Asks first your name, then "Not at home," says he.

[Respectable inns always have some excuse for refusing to entertain the wayfarer. Some one at last takes pity on him and points out a low pot-house, with a green branch for a sign, where every one is welcome. Here too, however, he is contemptuously received. The landlord looks at the dust on his boots, and hesitates about admitting him; the chambermaids address him, not as "Sir," but as "You, there!" and when dinner is served he is not asked to sit down to table.]

And when I ask to go to bed, appears  
 The stable-boy with rushlight in his hand,  
 And takes me up some seven flights of stairs  
 To a den with neither chair nor wash-hand stand;  
 He sets the candle down upon the floor,  
 And, after going out, he locks the door.

[Yet these inconveniences are not the invariable rule; and, after all, they are outweighed by the advantages of travelling on foot. One is perfectly independent, and can do as one likes, which is not always the case with wealthy people.]

And thus on foot I take my cheerful way,—  
 Moreover, with economy 'tis fraught;  
 My shoes are paid for—I take leave to say,  
 I doubt my lord's fine equipage is not.  
 Since then I pay my way respectably—  
 Henceforth, none but St. Francis' nag<sup>1</sup> for me!

*Filippo Pananti (1776-1837).*

<sup>1</sup> "*Il cavallo di San Francesco*" is a proverbial expression for going on foot—like "Shanks' mare" in Ireland.

*LOVE AND A QUIET LIFE.*

FROM "L'AMOR PACIFICO."



○ BLESSED peace! O close and sacred tie!  
Long life to Veneranda and her dove!  
But I must needs inform you how and why  
This faithful pair first told their tender love.  
At a friend's house they'd dined, and when upstairs  
Found themselves side by side in two arm-chairs.

When half-an-hour had mutely passed away,

Taddeo plucked up heart and broke the ice.

“Pray, madam, . . . did you like the cream to-day?”

“Delicious!” “I’m so glad you thought it nice.

The ham too?” “Exquisite!” “And then the birds?”

“Perfection!” “And the fish?” “Beyond all words!”

“’Tis true that we had hardly room to sit.”

“Nay, ’twas a pleasure, when one sat by *you*;

But if, dear ma’am, I jogged your arm a bit,

Trust me, ’twas what I could not choose but do.”

“Don’t mention it. *You* suffered, I suspect?

I’m stout, you see!” “An excellent defect!”

“Indeed?” “Indeed! That face now, in my eyes,

Blooms like May-day. Long may it last in blow!”

“I’m healthy!” “Healthy! Fresh as Paradise!”

“Come, come! I’m somewhat stout!” “And better so!

For my part, if I might, I’d very fain

Have leave to call upon you now and then.”

“Oh! you’d be bored!” “I bored! What words are these?

’Twould rather be my best and primest pleasure.”

“Fie! Now you’re flattering! Well! Come when you please!”

“I think, dear madam, in no common measure,

Our characters are fitted to unite,

What do *you* say?”

“La!—Well—perhaps they might!”

*Giuseppe Giusti* (1809–1850).

*INSTRUCTIONS TO A YOUNG ASPIRANT FOR  
OFFICE.*



THAT you must cut all liberals whatever,  
 All men of genius, all the "dangerous" crew,  
 Not prate of books or papers, but endeavour  
 To prove that they are all High Dutch to you ;  
 That you must bolt your heart, and hold your tongue,  
 You've known, yourself, I'm well aware, for long. . . .

. . . Now, first and foremost, learn to bend your back !—  
 Be Veneration's self personified.

Dress ill; your clothes should fit you like a sack,

And always take some big-wig for your guide.

The cowl does make the monk in such a case,

And the wall's valued by its plaster face. . . .

Get introduced, and every blessed night

Visit some lout they've made a minister.

There choose your time, and change your stops aright,

According as his tastes or whims prefer.

And if tomfoolery's the thing for winning,

Play the tomfool, and set the folks a-grinning.

Keep him supplied with news, and ferret out

Fresh scandal, gossip, all that folks will tell you ;

And, so to speak, what the whole town's about,

Down from His Highness even to Stenterello.<sup>1</sup> . . .

Say there arise a scandal, a dispute,

A hurly-burly in your patron's house,—

*"Know-nought knew much, who knew when to be mute,"*

Says the old saw. Be mute, then, as a mouse !

Great men will sometimes act like fools, 'tis certain,

In their own homes. Be ours to—drop the curtain !

Jump at all hints. Keep begging every way.

Take all they give you, so they let you serve ;

But—beg ! *"The toad refused to beg,"* they say,

*"And therefore got no tail."* Besides, observe

That, if not propped and fostered by our need,

Great men's authority's a dream indeed.

Remember to ignore and overpass

Each rude rebuff, each peevish look and tone,

And, like Pope Sixtus, write yourself an ass

If you're resolved to reach *your* papal throne.

After the bitters, sweets will come at length,

And sturdy begging beat close-fisted strength.

<sup>1</sup> A favourite comic character at Florence. See Notes at end.

With profit Gingillino did attend  
 To the sage preaching of his vulpine friend.  
 He went ; he knuckled down ; he bared his crown ;  
 He crept, crawled, coaxed, and cringed to sword and gown ;  
 And when they'd dried him, tried him, sifted him, drifted  
     him,  
 From Dan to Beersheba, at last they lifted him—  
 When the whole process they'd gone through and through,  
 With rites baptismal and with chrismal too—  
 Their heaven of three-piled roguedom to ascend,  
 Took him within the fold—and that's his end !

*Giuseppe Giusti.*

### *LETTER TO TOMMASO GROSSI.*

PISA, *Nov.* 15, 1845.

**W**ELL done! Signor Grossi! Well done, indeed! Your lordship is over there enjoying yourself; and nobody even dreams of talking about a poor wretch like me, who is neither here nor there. But don't you feel a singing in your ears from morning to night? You, I mean, you lazy, luxurious, thankless, forgetful wretch! Is it so much trouble to write on a piece of paper, "I am well—the family ditto, and we all remember you"? Is this what comes of your having a good time—eh? Now my gentleman is at Bellano, in his own house, away from everything that can possibly worry him, surrounded with every earthly blessing, and thinks he has the Pope in his pocket. . . . As for his friends, they are "out of sight, out of mind," with him. Only let me come to Milan again, and you shall see. If ever you dare to try your old tricks again in my presence, I shall say to you, with a face a yard long—

Let Signor Grossi hook !

On him I will not look (*facit indignatio versum*).

But, joking apart, what infernal airs are these you are giving yourself in not answering? Are all the pens used in your house made of lead? I, who am one of the laziest men living under the vault of heaven, have written you people letters upon letters, and you are no more to be moved than so many blocks. Only M. has had pity on me; but he is so upset on account of a certain promise of ——'s, that, out of a page and a half of letter, there were only about three lines for me. But even this is something, and something is better than nothing. But against *you* I have a grudge—one big enough to make me do something outrageous. . . .

I ought not to say so—because not one of the whole lot of you deserves it—but the parting from you threw me into a deep melancholy, which still continues. My liver, or some other fiend who has his dwelling under the ribs, has again got out of order,—and no one knows how much trouble it will give me before getting right again. If I had to endure another winter like the last, Job might be said to have lived and died in the greatest comfort in comparison with me. I do not wish to have anything more to do with doctors—I have always found them just like the fog, which leaves the weather as it finds it. I trust in the climate of Pisa, and if there is anything that I wish for, it is a little bottle of "*Never-mind-it*," which is a medicine good for many diseases. Though, I think, when one has it, one must prepare it for himself, and measure out his own doses; and I have never been a skilled apothecary as regards this particular drug. On the contrary, it has always been a failing of mine to thrust my head too deeply into the affairs of this ridiculous world,—and my own, which are the most ridiculous of all,—and once in, it is no easy matter to get it out again. How many times I have made up my mind to think only of myself, and let things go as they like! and every time I do so, this idiotic heart, which, through no fault of my own, I have to drag about with me, has made



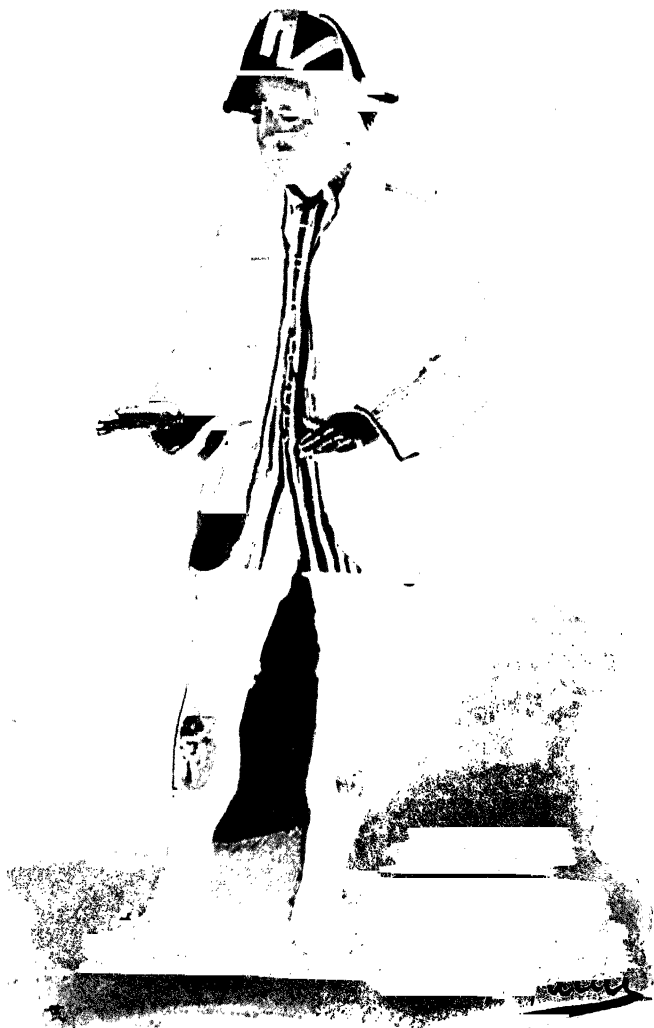
me look like a fool of the first magnitude. Certainly it is quite evident that I was intended by nature for burlesque; since every time I have taken a thing seriously, I have been sure, sooner or later, to act the harlequin before my own eyes. So that now, whenever I have to do with worthy people who are firm and solid, and (so to speak) all in one piece, I am always secretly in dread lest one day or other they should belie their natures and turn out the veriest quicksilver. Do you know that in the end it really cannot be such a very great misfortune to leave this puppet-show that they call life? Surely it cannot be that we shall have people playing Punch and Judy tricks in the other world! Either we shall all have become wise, or at least, if we are destined to carry with us a grain or so of folly and ridiculousness, I do believe that we shall be permitted to divide into sets according to our own particular fancy. And, look you, if, when I have arrived up there, I happen to see two or three men that I know of, I shall join that clique at once, and stay there *per omnia sæcula sæculorum*. With these certain ones I should hope that (the weakness of our mortal nature being once left behind) a thing once said would be looked upon as settled, and that we should have an end of—

“Yes, I answered you last night—

No, this morning, sir, I say!”

But I hope you understand that I want neither you nor Sandrino Manzoni near me, either in this world or the next; for I shall never forget the way you have treated me, letting me go without so much as a “Good-bye”—not even a “*Go and be hanged to you.*” I have made a note of it, and shall remember it against you till Doomsday.

Why is it that rascals like you can always put honest men in the wrong? In the very act of closing this letter I receive yours of the 2nd! Well, well, that is not so bad, but I



"STENTERELLO."

have yet to see Manzoni's ; and you, by promising it, have done me more harm than good.

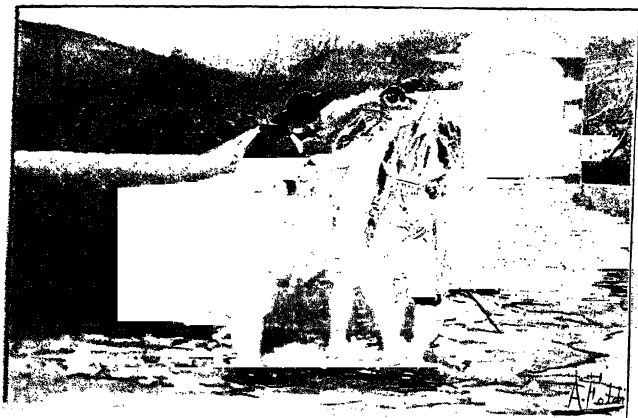
Let us hope that our dear Alessandro Manzoni (who, by-the-bye, is a——; never mind, I won't write it!) will be able to come to Pisa with Donna Teresa and Vittorina. Apropos of Vittorina, is it true that she has not been well of late? Arconati told me she had a cold when she left: I should be very sorry to think she was suffering from anything worse. Remember me to every one, not forgetting our friends Torti and Rossari; I have been going to write to them over and over again. I am glad to hear you are all well at home; were it not that I am still angry with you for that silence of a month and more, I should be inclined to tell you that you deserve this and every other good fortune. Well, good-bye, you rascal, and since there are some wrongs for which it is useless to claim compensation, I may as well send you my love.

P.S.—As for work, I have a great number of irons in the fire, but I am terribly afraid my stock of wood will not last long enough to heat them. When a perfect anarchy of plans and projects comes to life in my brain, this is a sign that it is not a time for finishing anything at all at all. Meanwhile, I shall dawdle along, reading this and that, as it happens,—and when the hour for production strikes, I shall produce.

*Giuseppe Giusti.*

*DON ABBONDIO AND THE BRAVOES.*

FROM "I PROMESSI SPOSI."



[Don Abbondio, a village priest, walking by himself in a lonely place, sees two bravoes waiting for him in a narrow lane.]

. . . He quickened his pace, recited a verse in a louder tone, composed his countenance to all the calm and cheerfulness he could summon up for the moment, made every effort to prepare a smile, and when he found himself right in front of the two swashbucklers, he ejaculated, mentally, "Now we're in for it!" and stopped short.

"Your Reverence!" said one of the two, looking him full in the face.

"Who wants me?" replied Don Abbondio, raising his eyes from his book, and holding it open in both hands.

"You intend," pursued the other, with the threatening and angry look of a man who has caught his inferior in the commission of a crime—"you intend to perform the

ceremony of marriage, to-morrow, between Renzo Trama-  
glino and Lucia Mondella."

"That is . . ." answered Don Abbondio, in a quavering voice—"that is . . . gentlemen, you are men of the world, and you know how these matters take place. The poor priest has nothing whatever to say in the business; they arrange everything between themselves, and then . . . then they come to us, as you would come to a bank to draw out your money, and we—well, we are the servants of the congregation."

"Well, then," said the bravo, in an undertone, but with an impressive air of command, "this marriage is not to take place, either to-morrow, or at any other time."

"But, gentlemen," expostulated Don Abbondio, in the meek and gentle voice of a man trying to persuade an impatient listener—"but, gentlemen, do be good enough to put yourselves in my place. If the thing depended on me, now . . . you see perfectly well that it matters nothing to me, one way or the other."

"Come!" interrupted the bravo; "if the business had to be settled by talk, you would have us all, in a moment. We know nothing more about it, and do not want to. A man warned . . . you understand?"

"But, gentlemen, you are too just, too reasonable——"

"But," interrupted the second bravo, who now spoke for the first time—"but either the marriage will not take place, or—or the man who performs it will not repent of doing so, because he will not have time, and——" he finished off his sentence with a good round oath.

"Hush!" returned the first speaker; "his Reverence knows the ways of the world; and we are gentlemen, and do not want to do him any harm, if he will only have a little common-sense. Your Reverence, the most illustrious Signor Don Rodrigo, our master, sends you his most respectful salutations."

This name was like a flash of light in the darkness and confusion of Don Abbondio's mind, but only served to increase his terror. He instinctively made a low bow, and said, "If you could suggest to me . . ."

"Oh! Suggest to you who know Latin!" interrupted the bravo, with a laugh which was half ferocious and half foolish. "That is your business. And, above all, never let a word escape you about this hint which we have given you for your good; otherwise . . . ahem! . . . it would be the same thing as if you were to perform that marriage. Come! What message do you wish us to give to the illustrious Don Rodrigo?"

"My respects."

"Explain yourself, your Reverence!"

". . . Disposed . . . always disposed to obedience. . ."

In uttering these words he did not quite know, himself, whether he was giving a promise, or merely bestowing a commonplace compliment. The bravoës took it—or appeared to do so—in the more serious sense.

"Very good. Good-night, your Reverence," said one of them, and turned, with his comrade, to depart. Don Abbondio, who a few minutes before would have given one of the eyes out of his head to get rid of them, now would have liked to prolong the conversation. "Gentlemen," he began, shutting his book with both hands; but, without listening to him, they took the road by which he had come, singing the while a ditty better not transcribed, and were soon out of sight. Poor Don Abbondio remained for a moment with his mouth wide open, as if spell-bound; then he turned up the lane leading to his house, walking slowly, and seeming scarcely able to drag one leg after the other. . . .

*Alessandro Manzoni (1784–1873).*

*THE INTERRUPTED WEDDING.*

[Don Abbondio, by finding one excuse after another for deferring the marriage, has driven Renzo nearly to despair. At last, having discovered the reason for the priest's hesitation, in Don Rodrigo's hostility, he eagerly adopts a suggestion of Lucia's mother, Agnese, to the effect that a perfectly legal, though irregular, marriage may be performed by the parties severally pronouncing, before a priest, and in the presence of witnesses, the words, "This is my wife," and "This is my husband." Renzo easily secures two witnesses, in the persons of his friend Tonio and the latter's half-witted brother. Tonio owes Don Abbondio twenty-five *lire*, for which the priest holds his wife's necklace in pledge, and Renzo secures his co-operation by giving him the amount of the debt. The five start at dusk for Don Abbondio's house. Agnese engages the priest's housekeeper in conversation outside the front door, and the others slip upstairs unnoticed—the bride and bridegroom waiting on the landing, while Tonio knocks at the door of Don Abbondio's sitting-room.]

"*Deo gratias !*" said Tonio, in a loud voice.

"Tonio, eh? Come in," replied a voice from within.

Tonio opened the door just wide enough to admit himself and his brother, one at a time, and then closed it after him, while Renzo and Lucia remained silent and motionless in the dark.

Don Abbondio was sitting in an old arm-chair, wrapped in a dilapidated dressing-gown, with an ancient cap on his head, which made a frame all round his face. By the faint light of a small lamp the two thick white tufts of hair which projected from under the cap, his bushy white eyebrows, moustache, and pointed beard all seemed, on his brown and wrinkled face, like bushes covered with snow on a rocky hillside seen by moonlight.

"Ah! ah!" was his salutation, as he took off his spectacles and put them into the book he was reading.

"Your Reverence will say we are late in coming," said Tonio, bowing, as did Gervaso, but more awkwardly.



"Certainly it is late—late in every way. Do you know that I am ill?"

"Oh! I am very sorry, sir!"

"You surely must have heard that I am ill, and don't know when I can see any one. . . . But why have you brought that—that fellow with you?"

"Oh! just for company, like, sir!"

"Very good—now let us see."

"There are twenty-five new *berlinghe*, sir—those with Saint Ambrose on horseback on them," said Tonio, drawing a folded paper from his pocket.

"Let us see," returned Abbon-dio, and taking



the paper, he put on his spectacles, unfolded it, took out the silver pieces, turned them over and over, counted them, and found them correct.

"Now, your Reverence, will you kindly give me my Tecla's necklace?"

"Quite right," replied Don Abbondio; and going to a cupboard, he unlocked it, and having first looked round, as if to keep away any spectators, opened one side, stood in front of the open door, so that no one could see in, put in his head to look for the pledge, and his arm to take it out, and, having extracted it, locked the cupboard, unwrapped the paper, said interrogatively, "All right?" wrapped it up again, and handed it over to Tonio.

"Now," said the latter, "would you please let me have a little black and white, sir?"

"This, too!" exclaimed Don Abbondio; "they are up to every trick! Eh! how suspicious the world has grown! Can't you trust me?"

"How, your Reverence, not trust you? You do me wrong! But as my name is down on your book, on the debtor side, . . . and you have already had the trouble of writing it once, so . . . in case anything were to happen, you know . . ."

"All right, all right," interrupted Don Abbondio, and, grumbling to himself, he opened the table drawer, took out pen, paper, and inkstand, and began to write, repeating the words out loud as he set them down. Meanwhile, Tonio, and, at a sign from him, Gervaso, placed themselves in front of the table, so as to prevent the writer from seeing the door, and, as if in mere idleness, began to move their feet about noisily on the floor, in order to serve as a signal to those outside, and, at the same time, to deaden the sound of their footsteps. Don Abbondio, intent on his work, noticed nothing. Renzo and Lucia hearing the signal, entered on tiptoe, holding their breath, and stood close behind the two

brothers. Meanwhile, Don Abbondio, who had finished writing, read over the document attentively, without raising his eyes from the paper, folded it, and saying, "Will you be satisfied now?" took off his spectacles with one hand, and held out the sheet to Tonio with the other. Tonio, while stretching out his hand to take it, stepped back on one side, and Gervaso, at a sign from him, on the other, and between

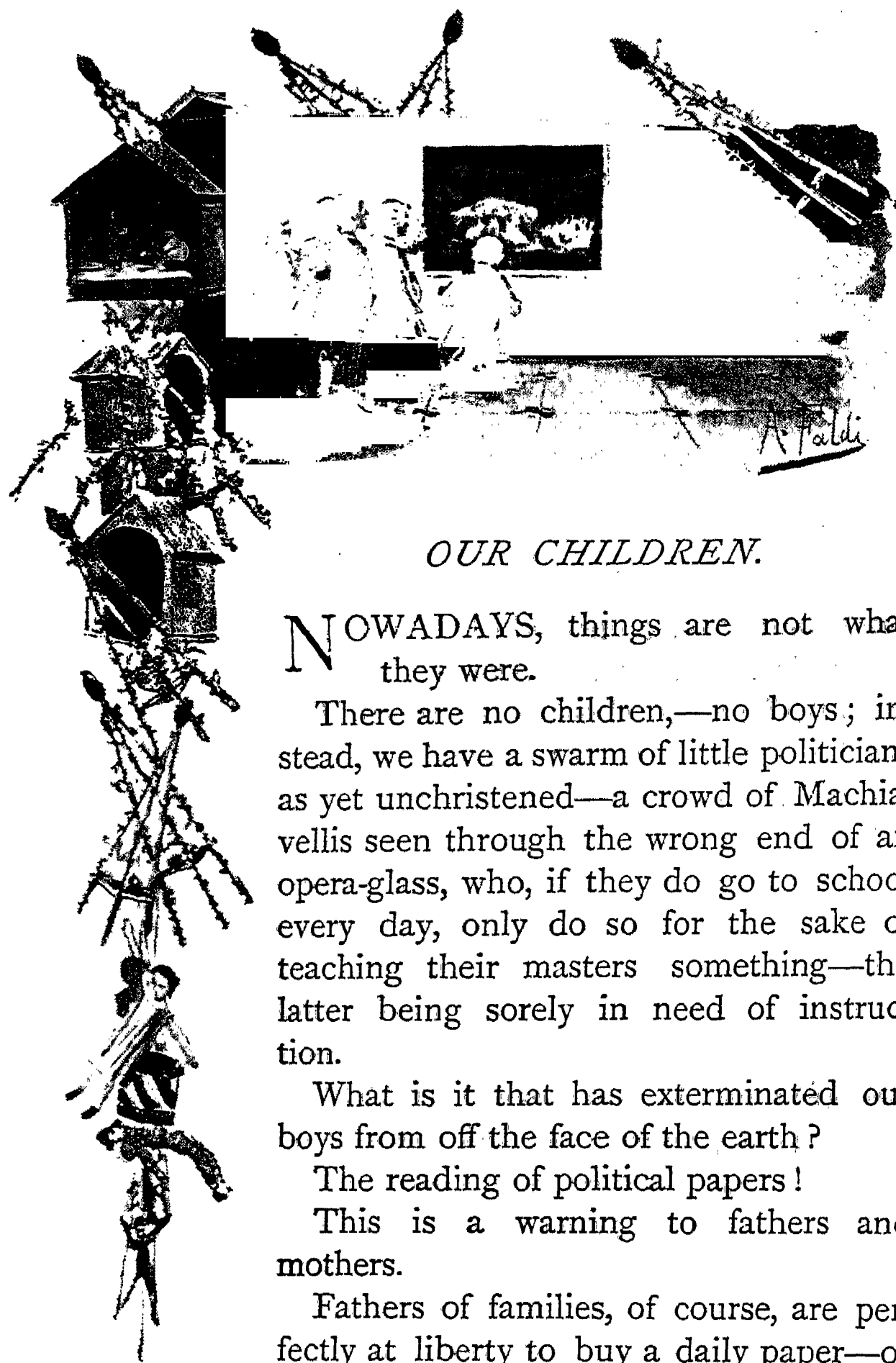


the two appeared Renzo and Lucia. Don Abbondio saw them, started, was dumfounded, became furious, thought it over, and came to a resolution, all in the time that Renzo took in uttering these words: "Your Reverence, in the presence of these witnesses, this is my wife!" His lips had not yet ceased moving when Don Abbondio let fall the receipt, which he was holding in his left hand, raised the lamp, and seizing the table-cloth with his right hand, dragged

it violently towards him, throwing book, papers, and inkstand to the ground, and, springing between the chair and table, approached Lucia. The poor girl, with her sweet voice all trembling, had only just been able to say "This is . . ." when Don Abbondio rudely flung the table-cloth over her head, and immediately dropping the lamp which he held in his other hand, used the latter to wrap it tightly round her face, nearly suffocating her, while he roared at the top of his voice, like a wounded bull, "Perpetua! Perpetua! treason! help!" When the light was out the priest let go his hold of the girl, went groping about for the door leading into an inner room, and, having found it, entered and locked himself in, still shouting, "Perpetua! treason! help! get out of this house! get out of this house!" In the other room all was confusion; Renzo, trying to catch the priest, and waving his hands about as though he had been playing at blind-man's buff, had reached the door, and kept knocking, crying out, "Open! open! don't make a noise!" Lucia called Renzo in a feeble voice, and said supplicatingly, "Let us go! do let us go!" Tonio was down on his hands and knees, feeling about the floor to find his receipt, while Gervaso jumped about and yelled like one possessed, trying to get out by the door leading to the stairs.

In the midst of this confusion we cannot refrain from a momentary reflection. Renzo, raising a noise by night in another man's house, which he had surreptitiously entered, and keeping its owner besieged in an inner room, has every appearance of being an oppressor,—yet, after all, when you come to look at it, he was the oppressed. Don Abbondio, surprised, put to flight, frightened out of his wits while quietly attending to his own business, would seem to be the victim; and yet in reality, it was he who did the wrong. So goes the world, as it often happens; at least, so it used to go in the seventeenth century.

*A. Manzoni.*



### *OUR CHILDREN.*

NOWADAYS, things are not what they were.

There are no children,—no boys; instead, we have a swarm of little politicians as yet unchristened—a crowd of Machiavellis seen through the wrong end of an opera-glass, who, if they do go to school every day, only do so for the sake of teaching their masters something—the latter being sorely in need of instruction.

What is it that has exterminated our boys from off the face of the earth?

The reading of political papers!

This is a warning to fathers and mothers.

Fathers of families, of course, are perfectly at liberty to buy a daily paper—or two, or five, or ten. For newspapers, even if taken to excess, are like tamarind jelly—if they do no good, they cannot do much harm. They are quite safe, if you know

how to read them—the right way of the stuff, like English broadcloth.

But the mischief is this: fathers of families, when they have glanced over the paper, usually leave it on the table, or the sofa, or the mantelpiece—in short, in one of many places that are within sight and reach of small boys. This is great imprudence; because we must remember that our boys are victims to a gluttonous, eager, devouring passion for the reading of political papers. Perhaps this is an outcome of that inborn instinct which shows itself at a very early age in the love for fables and fairy-tales.

Then begin the troubles in the family.

A small boy comes with the newspaper in his hand and asks his mother—

“Do tell me, mamma, what is the difference between ‘Authentic News’ and ‘Various News’?”

“‘Authentic,’” replies the mother at random, “is what really happens, and ‘Various’ is what the journalists invent to fill up the paper.”

~~“Oh! what story-tellers!”~~

“Well, then, you should be very careful always to tell the truth; if you don’t, you will go to Purgatory for seventy years, and in this world every one will take you for a journalist!”

Amid the infinitely varied ranks of youth there are many who, through innate depravity, and a fatally precocious hankering after political life, carry their reckless temerity so far as to read all the Parliamentary reports, from the first line to the last!

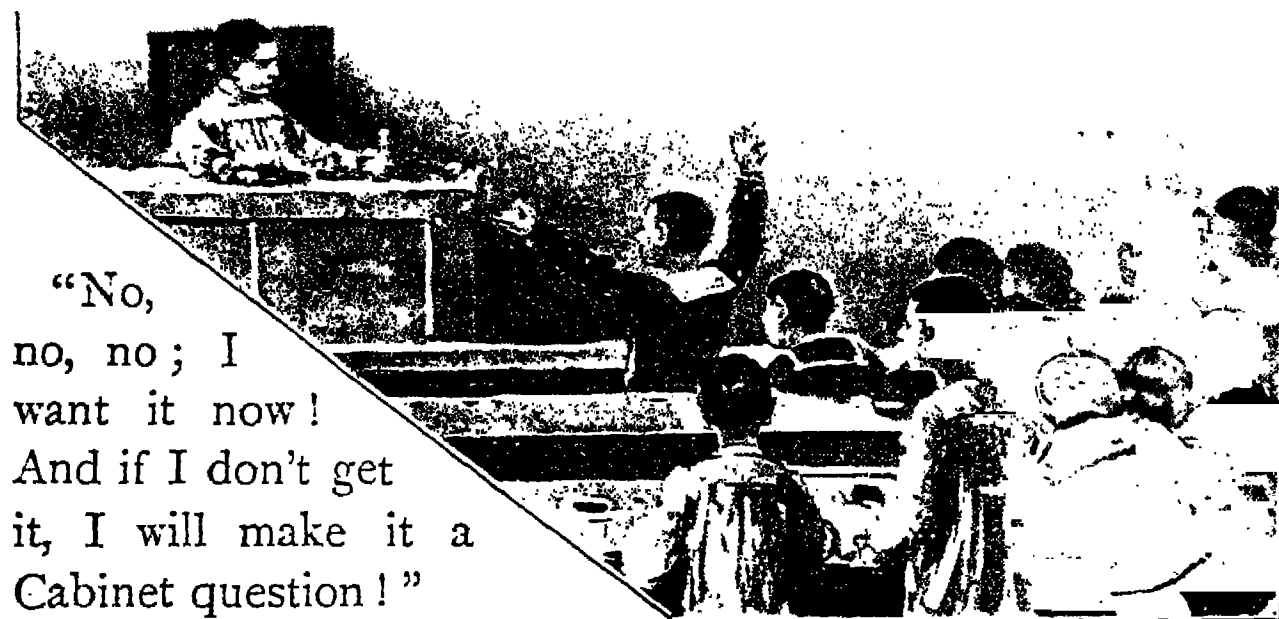
Let us say it once for all. When a boy gives himself up without restraint, and without shame, to the reading of the Parliamentary debates, it is all up with him! Good-bye to candour; good-bye to innocence, and the simple language of the age of infancy.

One day Cecco receives a maternal reprimand, because, with his customary negligence, he has omitted to wash his hands.

"I repudiate the malignant insinuation," replies the culprit, immediately hiding the two inconvenient "documents" in the pockets of his knickerbockers.

Another day Gigino refuses to go to school unless his mother will give him the money to buy a cardboard Punch.

"Yes, dear," says his mother; "go away to school, and I will buy you the Punch when you come home."



"No,  
no, no; I  
want it now!  
And if I don't get  
it, I will make it a  
Cabinet question!"

The poor mother, at this speech, finds her understanding failing her, and remains open-mouthed. Then enters Raffaello, the elder brother, who says to the younger—

"Instead of thinking about Punches, you would do better to study your grammar. Remember how yesterday the master, after having three times called you a donkey, 'passed on to the order of the day, pure and simple.'"

Gigino was about to reply with an impertinence, but, unwilling to fail in respect towards his elder brother, he contented himself with making faces at him.

Mamma (who has meanwhile recovered): "Is that the

way you treat your brother? He is older than you, and you ought to respect him."

Gigino (raising his voice): "I have all possible esteem and respect for the honourable member who has just preceded me"—(the Debates again!); "but, on the other hand, as far as I am concerned, he will always be a liar and a spy. . . ."

Beppino is made of quicksilver. While carrying out one trick he is already thinking of a new one, so that neither in school nor at home is there any peace to be had for him.

At last his father, unable to stand it any longer, called him into the study for a parental lecture.

During the first division of the lecture Beppino was surreptitiously gnawing a dried plum. At the opening of the second division he removed the stone, and shot it at the nose of a plaster Dante on the writing-desk. At the third head Beppino lost all patience, and began to yell—

"Enough! enough! The closure!"

"Closure or no closure!" cried his infuriated parent; "if you interrupt me again with your impudence—rascal, street-boy, chatterbox——"

"Order! order!" cried Beppino, pulling at the bell-rope.

"I'll order you——"

But, just as his father was about to rise, Beppino snatched the smoking-cap from his head, and, putting it on himself, remarked, in a nasal voice—

"Gentlemen, the President has put on his hat, and the discussion is adjourned."

The violent ringing of the bell summons the mother, two aunts, the housemaid, and the lady's little dog. These having heard the narrative of Beppino's unparalleled insolence, are seized with such indignation that they begin to laugh like mad.

The little dog, being unable to laugh like the rest, barks, and evidences his share in the family joys and sorrows by beginning to gnaw his dear master's embroidered slippers.

*Collodi.*

### *STRAY THOUGHTS OF AN IDLER.*

HE who sleeps catches no fish,"—but he who keeps awake catches crabs every moment of his life.

All professions can yield a man enough to live on,—except professions of faith.

When attending the performance of some modern operas, it has struck me that the conductor was only beating time because he could not beat the composer.

If in the sight of the law all men are equal, Heaven save us from getting into its sight.

When you want to get rid of a dog, you take off his collar;—when the king wants to get rid of a minister, he gives him the collar—of the Order of the Annunziata.

The place where they ruin people's voices, and throw aside all the canons of art, is called the *Conservatoire*; and a hospital full of sick people is called a "house of health" (*Casa di Salute*).

Among the many motives which induce me to stay away from the theatre is the utter absence of all motive in modern operas.

How many old phrases are required to make a new electoral programme!

All musical notes may express cheerful ideas; it is only the notes of creditors which arouse none but melancholy reflections.

I entered the shop of a pork-butcher at the moment when



his son, aged eight, was returning from school. The poor boy was weeping bitterly.

"The old story!" exclaimed his parent; "I suppose you did not learn your lessons, and the master called you an ass, as you deserved!"

"Yes!" replied the child, sobbing, "he *did* call me an ass,—and then——"

"Well,—and then—what else?"

"He said, 'Well, after all, it is no wonder—*like father, like son!*'"

"Did he, indeed? the animal!" exclaimed the pork-butcher. "And to think that perhaps he has not yet eaten the whole of those two sausages I sent him at Christmas!"

*Antonio Ghislanzoni.*

## MEN AND INSTRUMENTS.

WE have been told over and over again that "the style is the man."

I would substitute for this "The instrument is the man."

And whereas the proverb runs, "Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are," I would amend it thus, "Tell me what you blow into or scrape upon, and I will tell your fortune."

After this, I must request professional gentlemen, employed in orchestras and otherwise, not to suspect any malicious intent in my remarks, which are principally aimed at amateurs—those who murder some instrument or other out of pure conviction,—all who began to twang the guitar when they were studying medicine, or to practise on the cornet after a year's experience of matrimony.

## THE CLARIONET.

This instrument consists of a severe cold in the head, contained in a tube of yellow wood.

The clarionet was not invented by the Conservatoire, but by Fate.

A chiropodist may be produced by study and hard work ; but the clarionet player is born, not made.

The citizen predestined to the clarionet has an intelligence which is almost obtuse up to the age of eighteen—an epoch of incubation, when he begins to feel in his nose the first thrills of his fatal vocation.

Then his intellect—limited even then—ceases its development altogether ; but his nasal organ, in revenge, assumes colossal dimensions.

At twenty he buys his first clarionet for fourteen francs ; and three months later his landlord gives him notice. At twenty-five he is admitted into the band of the National Guard.

He dies of a broken heart on finding that not one of his three sons shows the slightest inclination for the instrument with which he has blown all his wits.

## THE TROMBONE.

The man who plays on this instrument is always one who seeks oblivion in its society—oblivion of domestic troubles, or consolation for love betrayed.

The man who has held a metal tube in his mouth for six months finds himself proof against every disillusion.

At the age of fifty he finds that, of all human passions and feelings, nothing is left him but an insatiable thirst.

Later on, if he wants to obtain the position of porter in a gentleman's house, or aspires to the hand of a woman with a delicate ear, he tries to lay aside his instrument, but the taste for loud notes and strong liquors only leaves him with life.

Finally, after a harmonious career of seventy-eight years, he is apt to die of grief because the public-house keeper will not let him have a glass of wine on credit.

#### THE ACCORDEON.

This is the first instrument of youth and innocent hearts.

The individual in question begins playing it in the back room of his father's shop—the latter, as a rule, is a chemist by profession—and continues it up to the age of fifteen. At this period, if he does not die, he deserts the accordeon for the

#### HARMONIFLUTE.

This instrument, on account of the nature of its monotonous sounds and its tremendous plaintiveness, acts on the nerves of those who hear, and predisposes to melancholy those who play it.

The harmoniflautist is usually tender and lymphatic of constitution, with blue eyes, and eats only white meats and farinaceous food.

If a man, he is called Oscar ; those of the other sex are named Adelaide.

At home, he or she is in the habit of bringing out the instrument at dessert, and dinner being over, and the spirits of the family, therefore, more or less cheerfully disposed, will entertain the company with the *Miserere* in *Il Trovatore*, or some similar melody.

The harmoniflautist weeps easily. After practising on the instrument for fifteen years or so, he or she dissolves altogether, and is converted into a brook.

#### THE ORGAN.

This complicated and majestic instrument is of a clerical character, and destined, by its great volume of sound, to drown the flat singing of clergy and congregation in church.

The organist is usually a person sent into the world with the vocation of making a great noise without undue expenditure of strength; one who wants to blow harder than others without wearing out his own bellows.

He becomes at forty the intimate friend of the parish priest, and the most influential person connected with the church. By dint of repeating the same refrains every day at matins and vespers, he acquires a knowledge of Latin, and gets all the anthems, hymns, and masses by heart. At fifty he marries a devout spinster recommended by the parish priest.

He makes a kind and good-tempered husband; his only defect in that capacity being his habit of dreaming out loud on the eve of every ecclesiastical solemnity. On Easter Eve, for instance, he nearly always awakens his wife by intoning, with the full force of his lungs, "*Resurrexit.*" The good woman, thus abruptly aroused, never fails to answer him with the orthodox "*Alleluia!*"

At the age of sixty he becomes deaf, and then begins to think his own playing perfection. At seventy he usually dies of a broken heart, because the new priest, who knows not Joseph, instead of asking him to dine at the principal table with the ecclesiastics and other church authorities, has relegated him to an inferior place, and the society of the sacristan and the grave-digger.

#### THE FLUTE.

The unhappy man who succumbs to the fascinations of this instrument is never one who has attained the full development of his intellectual faculties. He always has a pointed nose, marries a short-sighted woman, and dies run over by an omnibus.

The flute is the most fatal of all instruments. It requires a peculiar conformation and special culture of the thumb-nail, with a view to those holes which have to be only half closed.

The man who plays the flute frequently adds to his other infirmities a mania for keeping tame weasels, turtle-doves, or guinea-pigs.

#### THE VIOLONCELLO.

To play the 'cello you require to have long, thin fingers ; but it is still more indispensable to have very long hair falling over a greasy coat-collar.

In case of fire, the 'cellist who sees his wife and his 'cello in danger will save the latter first.

His greatest satisfaction, as a general thing, is that of "making the strings weep." Sometimes, indeed, he succeeds in making his wife and family do the same thing in consequence of a regimen of excessive frugality. Sometimes, too, it happens to him to make people laugh and yawn, but this, according to him, is the result of atmospheric influences.

He can express, through his loftily-attuned strings, all possible griefs and sorrows, except those of his audience and his creditors.

#### THE DRUM.

An immense apparatus of wood and sheepskin, full of air and of sinister presages. In melodrama the roll of the drum serves to announce the arrival of a fatal personage, an agent of Destiny ; in most cases, an ill-used husband. Sometimes this funereal rumbling serves to describe silence—sometimes to indicate the depths of the *prima donna's* despair.

The drummer is a serious man, possessed with the sense of his high dramatic mission. He is able, however, to conceal his conscious pride, and sleep on his instrument when the rest of the orchestra is making all the noise it can. In such cases he commissions the nearest of his colleagues to awaken him at the proper moment.

On awaking, he seizes the two drum-sticks and begins

to beat ; but, should his neighbour forget to rouse him, he prolongs his slumbers till the fall of the curtain. Then he shakes himself, perceives that the opera is over, and rubs his eyes ; and if it happens that the conductor reprimands him for his remissness at the *attack*, he shrugs his shoulders and replies, “Never mind, the tenor died all the same. A roll of the drum more or less, what does it signify ?”

### THE BIG DRUM.

Of this it is quite unnecessary to speak. It is the instrument of the age ; and ministers, deputies, men of science, poets, hairdressers, and dentists have all learned to perform on it to perfection. . . . The multitude will always answer the summons of its “*boom! boom!*”—and he will always be in the right who thumps it hardest.

*A. Ghislanzoni.*

### THE DELIGHTS OF JOURNALISM.

“MY dear boy,” said Giuntini, almost seriously, “I lost all my illusions at eighteen. At that epoch I believed that I possessed a sweetheart ; I was also guilty of the audacity of writing verses to her. I lived on blue sky, diluted with milk and honey. Afterwards I found out that my verses were based on a false supposition, and that the girl I loved had married a custom-house officer. This contributed in great part to the catastrophe which took place in my sentiments. At the present moment I have been writing in the papers for seventeen years. I get 250 francs a month here, on the *Progressist* ; eighty francs from a paper at Udine, whose politics I do not even know ; another sixty from the *Courier of Fashion* ; and beside that, I send leading articles, at five francs apiece, to the Radical *Phrygian Cap*, of Rimini, and others to the *Catholic Banner*, of Genoa, which

pays me eight francs for each. Add to this a sermon written now and then for the parish priest of our village at home—a conceited old fanatic who wants to be thought eloquent. Then I have to compile the *Young Wife's Almanac* every year, and the *Sportsman's and Angler's Calendar* for the publisher, Corretti; so that, taking one month with another, I can reckon on about 500 francs. I say nothing of contriving to advertise various tradesmen and contractors, in the course of my daily paragraphs, which brings me in nice little sums now and then. Very well; every month I manage not to spend more than 200 francs, the rest I put aside. I don't go to the theatre; I am not to be seen at *cafés*; as for lending money to my friends, you have perceived——”

“I have, alas!”

“There you have the explanation of my easy life. My dear fellow, the world is for him who knows how to take it.”

“It may be,” said Lauri; “the fault is mine. I don't deny it. Sometimes, do you know, I think of the little village at the foot of the Alps, all white with snow in winter. . . . What a fuss they used to make over me when I came home for the holidays! . . . How my father used to rest his great rough hand on my head, and say, “There's plenty inside here!” . . . Well, and then came Sixty-six. Venice! Venice for ever! Garibaldi! Italy! Liberty! . . . In those days, as you know, we believed in all that—and I went to the Tyrol after Garibaldi. There was no holding me after that. I thought I had the whole world at my feet. I never even thought of the University Entrance Examination. To think of it! A warrior who has smelt powder to go back to a schoolboy's tasks! . . . I could not even dream of such a thing—and of returning to the village even less. I should have had to talk politics with the chemist and the police-sergeant, when I had in my own person contributed to the unity of Italy. I do not know myself what grand dreams were shaping themselves in this stupid brain

of mine. I went to Florence, and passed some months in wearing out the pavement of Via Tornabuoni and Via Calzaioli, and my father, poor dear old man ! used to send me postal orders. . . . But I was going to make a career at Florence ! I was always in company with some of my old comrades of the Tyrol, all of them fervent patriots, who passed most of their time in speaking ill of their neighbours on the sofas of the *Bottegone*. I began to make the acquaintance of deputies and journalists, lounged about the editorial offices of the *Diritto* and the *Riforma*, and talked glibly about the crisis, Reconstruction, and the fusion of parties. In short, I was well on the way to imbecility ; and from thence to journalism is, as you know, but a step. And now, as I've made my bed, I've got to lie upon it, or throw myself out of the window. . . . There's no father to send me postal orders now. . . ."

Giuntini suddenly interrupted the flow of his reflections.

"I say, Manfredo, do you know it's ten o'clock, and you have not written a line of the daily 'summary' yet ?"

Lauri shook himself, re-lit his cigar, which had gone out, and once more began turning over the papers. Giuntini, too, had gone back to work ; but he, like all journalists, could cut all Europe to pieces, though his thoughts were wandering in the sphere of the moon.

"What telegrams has the *Times* to-day ?" he asked while scribbling away.

"None ; neither the *Times*, nor the *Daily News*, nor the *Temps*, nor the *Nord* ; they are all empty as my pockets. I don't in the least know how to make up this evening's Foreign Intelligence. There is a little about Afghanistan in the *République*, but all stale matter hashed up for the third or fourth time. I shall have to end by translating the latest Assembly scandal from the *Figaro*."

*Enrico Onufrio.*



*WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK.*

IT is said among business men that it requires twelve Jews to cheat a Genoese; but twelve Genoese are not enough to cheat a Greek. . . . Only one person, that I ever heard of, enjoys the not very enviable distinction of having cheated—not merely one Greek, but two.

He was a Bari man.

He was returning to Italy, but had no boots—or rather, the things he had were no longer boots. He carefully counted up his money, found that he had not enough to buy a new pair, and so quieted his conscience. Then he went to a shoemaker's in the Street of Hermes.<sup>1</sup>

"I want a pair of shoes by Monday morning, to fit me exactly, with round toes," etc.; in short, he gave the fullest directions.

"Certainly, sir. You shall have them without fail. They shall be sent to your house at ten on Monday morning."

The Bari man left his address and departed.

In the Street of Æolus he entered another shoemaker's shop and ordered a precisely similar pair of shoes in the same terms.

"Have I made myself understood?"

"Perfectly. Let me have the address, and on Monday at ten——"

"I shall not be in at ten. Don't send them before eleven."

"At eleven you may count on having them, without fail."

On Monday at ten the first victim appeared. The gentleman tried on the shoes; the right was a perfect fit, the left was fearfully tight over the instep; it wanted stretching a little.

"All right," said the obliging tradesman; "I will take it away, and bring it back to you to-morrow."

<sup>1</sup> Athens.

"Very well ; and I will settle your account then."

The shoemaker bowed himself out with the left shoe.

At eleven, punctual as a creditor, arrived the second predestined victim. The same scene was repeated ; but this time it was the right shoe that did not fit.

"You will have to put it over the last again, my friend."

"We'll soon set that right, sir." And this shoemaker, more knowing than the other, was about to take both shoes away with him.

"Leave the other," said the Bari man. "It's a fancy of mine . . . if you take them both, some one may come in and find that they fit him, and you will sell them to him, and I shall have to wait another week."

"But I assure you, sir——"

"No, no, my friend ; I know how things go. I want this pair of shoes and no other, and I insist on keeping the one."

The shoemaker bowed his head with a sigh, and went away to stretch the right shoe.

An hour later the Bari man and his shoes were already on board the Piræus steamer ; and on the following day the two victims met on his doorstep, each with a shoe in his hand, and looked into each other's rapidly lengthening faces.

*Napoleone Corazzini.*

### *THE FAMOUS TENOR, SPALLETTI.*

ABOUT a week after my arrival at Athens I was enjoying a *tête-à-tête*, at the Samos Restaurant, with a lamb cutlet of most unexampled obduracy, when there entered a stout individual, somewhere on the wrong side of fifty, dressed with great care, and sporting a gold chain of such length and massiveness that it might have served to fasten up a mastiff. His hands were covered with rings ; and, in

HULL



“WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK.”

entering, he made noise enough for ten. Accosting a waiter who could speak Italian, he roared—

“*Giuraddio!* What has become of my place?”

“This way,—this way, sir; there are four places at this table.”

It was the one where I was sitting.

The stout gentleman contorted his features with disgust, uttered language which would have been enough for any Arian, and came and sat beside me, remarking—

“*Giuraddio!* I don’t want my place taken!”

Every one present was looking at him, and smiling compassionately.

Before he had finished unfolding his napkin he was already asking me—

“Are you Italian, sir?”

“Yes.”

“Been in Athens long?”

“A few days.”

“I have been here three months. Every one knows me.”

“I should think so, if you always make as much noise as that.”

“You see how they are looking at me?”

“I have noticed it.”

“I . . . I suppose you know who I am?”

“I have not that honour.”

“I am the celebrated Spalletti. . . . You will know——”

“No. I confess my ignorance.”

“*Giuraddio!* half the newspapers in the world have noticed me.”

“I read very few newspapers.”

“Why?”

“Because I am a journalist.”

“I am here. I have already given six representations of *Le Prophète*.”

“And you are——”

“The celebrated tenor, Spalletti.”

“Blessed be modesty!”

“Eh!—What?”

“Nothing—only a remark on my part. A fine opera, *Le Prophète*.”

“Yes—so they say!”

“How—they say? Have you never heard it?”

“I!—I have other things to do. I get through my scenes, and that’s enough.”

“But have you not even read the words?”

“I have read my part,—and even that is too much. However, I think I will read it over one evening when I am going to bed, because I want to know who on earth this *Prophet* is.”

Yet it was this very part of the Prophet which he had just enacted for the sixth time!

He then told me that he had been engaged to sing in Thomas’s *Omeleto*—I should not have been surprised had he said *omelette*—and left, after telling me that he put up at the Gran Bretagna, and requesting me to come and see him there.

At the door he turned back, and said—

“You must come and hear me at the theatre to-night! I am quite convinced I shall make you shed tears.”

I went—and found that the worthy man was right. His performance was such that it would have drawn tears from a stone.

I afterwards heard that the same gentleman had been asked to sing at a charity concert, and, being told that in this way he would perform an *act of philanthropy*, had replied that it was unfortunately impossible, because he was not acquainted with the play of that name, and therefore could not sing in any act of it.

*Napoleone Corazzini.*

*RIVAL EARTHQUAKES.*

THERE was a long-standing rivalry—and one that was not professional alone—between the telegraph clerks of Pietranera and Golastretta. It is said to have begun at the Technical College, when the former carried off a silver medal hotly contested by the other; but this is not quite certain.

What is certain is that Pippo Corradi could not undertake the smallest thing but Nino d'Arco immediately proceeded to do likewise. Thus when the former took a fancy to become an amateur conjurer, Nino at once went in search of the necessary apparatus for amusing his friends with the miracles of white magic. He was not a success; he raised many a laugh by his want of skill; but this did not prevent him from throwing away more money still on boxes with false bottoms, pistols to shoot playing cards instead of balls, wonderful balls which multiply and grow larger in your hands, and the like. Cost what it might, he was determined to astonish his Golastretta friends, who extolled in his presence the portents they had seen accomplished at Pietranera by Corradi, and derided him by way of contrast.

Then when Pippo Corradi, who was of a strange fickleness in his tastes, gave up white magic in order to devote himself to music, and the study of the clarionet in particular, Nino d'Arco suddenly laid aside the magic toys, which had already wearied him not a little, took music lessons from the parish organist, bought a brand new ebony clarionet, and rode over on a donkey to call on Corradi, under the pretext of consulting him on his choice, but with the sole intention of humiliating him. It was the only time he ever succeeded. He found him blowing into the mouthpiece of a box-wood instrument, which he had bought second-hand for a few francs from an old clarionet player

in the town band. Nino swelled visibly with satisfaction at seeing the admiration and envy in his rival's eyes when he opened the leather case and showed him the polished keys of white metal, shining even more than the freshly varnished wood.

Nino put the instrument together delicately, and set it to his mouth, thinking to astonish Pippo with a scale in



semitones, but he unluckily broke down in the middle. Then was Corradi able to take his revenge; and not content with having played scales in all tones, major, minor, diatonic, and chromatic, suddenly, without warning Nino, who kept staring at his fingers manœuvring over the holes and keys, he dashed point-blank into his *pièce-de-résistance*, *La Donna*

*è Mobile*, tootling away quite divinely, till checked by the imperative need of taking breath. His eyes were nearly starting out of his head; his face was purple—but that was nothing! He chuckled inwardly at Nino's crestfallen look; and the latter, taking his instrument to pieces, put it back in the case, thus declaring himself vanquished.

Nino, returning to Golastretta, vented his vexation on his ass, because she would not go at a trot—just as though it had been she who taught Corradi to play *La Donna è Mobile*.



So true it is that passion renders man unjust! He rushed at once to his master to learn *La Donna è Mobile* for himself, so as to be able, in a short time, to play it before his hated rival. The latter, however, had another great advantage, besides that of being able to murder *Rigoletto*; he was the local post-master. In this point it was useless trying to rival him, however much Nino might dream of a spacious office, like



that at Pietranera, where Corradi, between the sale of one stamp and the next, between registering a letter, and administering a reprimand to the postman, could divert himself by blowing into his clarionet to his heart's content! Whereas he, Nino, was forced to escape from the house if he wished to practise and remain at peace with his family! Corradi, in his post-office, disturbed no one.

Nino did not know what a torment for the neighbourhood that clarionet was, shrilling from morning to night, with Corradi's usual obstinacy in anything he undertook. The shopkeeper opposite, poor wretch, swore all day long worse than a Turk, and did not know whether he was standing on his head or his feet every time that Pippo began to repeat the *Donna è Mobile*—that is to say, swore seven or eight times in the day. He made mistakes in his weights, he counted his change wrong;—though it is only fair to say that these errors were oftener in his own favour than in that of his customers. And if by any chance he saw Corradi at the window, he raised his hands towards him with a supplicating gesture, pretending to be jocular.

“You want to make me die of a fit! Good Lord!”

Of all this Nino d'Arco was quite ignorant when he started for Pietranera a month later, to surprise Corradi with *Mira Norma*, which he had learnt, in addition to the air which first roused his emulation. He found Pippo adding up his monthly accounts, and not disposed to talk about music or anything else. The fact was that the shopkeeper opposite had indeed fallen down dead in a fit at the third or fourth rendering of *La Donna è Mobile*, as he had said, just as though he had had a presentiment of what was to happen. The occurrence had such an effect on Pippo that he felt as if he had killed the man, and could not bear to touch the clarionet again. He would not even mention the subject. Nino bit his lips and returned home, without having so much as opened his clarionet case. Once more

it was the ass who paid the penalty. He had to relieve his feelings on some one or something.

If there were any need of an instance to prove that emulation is the most powerful agent in the development of the human faculties, this one would suffice. Seeing that Corradi had renounced the clarionet and all its delights, Nino no longer felt the slightest inclination to go on wasting his breath on his instrument, though it were of ebony, with keys of white metal. As a faithful historian, I ought to add that for one moment he was tempted by the idea of trying to attain to the glory of causing some one's death by a fit; but whether the Golastretta people had harder tympanums than those of Pietranera, or whether he himself was not possessed of the necessary strength and perseverance, certain it is that no human victim fell to Nino d'Arco's clarionet. And the fact of having no death on his conscience made him feel degraded in his own eyes for some time.

These had been the preludes to deeper and more difficult contests with his old schoolfellow.

Golastretta was situated between the central office of the province and the rival station of Pietranera; and thus it was Nino's duty to signal to his hated colleague the mean time by which he was to regulate his clock—a supremacy which Corradi could never take from him. But this was a joy of short duration.

Having very little to do, he was wont, after he had finished reading the *Gazette* or the last paper-covered novel, to snatch forty winks at his ease in the office. One morning, when he least expected it, the machine began clicking, and would not stop. It was his dear friend at Pietranera who kept sending despatches on despatches, and would not let him drop off comfortably.

By listening attentively, he soon made out what was the matter. The village of Pietranera had begun, on the

previous evening, to dance like a man bitten by the tarantula, set in motion by earthquake-shocks repeated from hour to hour. The Syndic was telegraphing to the Vice-Prefect, the Prefect, the Meteorological Office of the province, in the name of the terrified population. And Corradi, too, was telegraphing on his own account, signalling the shocks as fast as they occurred, and indicating their length, or the nature of the movement—in order to gain credit with his superiors, said Nino d'Arco, vexed that Gola-stretta should not have its half-dozen earthquakes as well.

How cruelly partial was Nature! Scarcely twenty kilometres away she was rendering Corradi an immense service with eight, ten, twenty shocks—between day and night—within the week; and for him not even the smallest vestige of any shock whatever. He could get no peace, and kept his ear to the instrument.

One day, behold! there passed the announcement of a scientific commission on its way to Pietranera in order to study these persistent seismic phenomena. A few days later he became aware of the transit of another despatch appointing the Pietranera telegraph-agent director of the Meteorologico-Seismic station, which the commission had thought it advisable to establish at that place. In a month from that time the speedy arrival of a large number of scientific instruments was wired down from headquarters.

Nino d'Arco could stand it no longer; nothing would serve but he must go and see with his own eyes what under the canopy that Meteorologico-Seismic Observatory could be which would not let him live in peace.

He could not recover from the astonishment into which he was thrown by the sight of all these machines already set up in position, whose strange names Pippo Corradi reeled off with the greatest ease, as he explained the working of each. Rain-gauge, wind-gauge, barometers, maximum and minimum thermometers, hygrometers, and

besides that a tromometer, and all sorts of devilries for marking the very slightest shocks of earthquake, indicating their nature, and recording the very hour at which they occurred, by means of stop-watches. . . . Nino was very far from understanding it all, but made believe to do so; and, at last, he remained quite a time gazing through a magnifying-glass at the pendulum constructed to register the movements of the earthquake by marking them with a sharp point on a sheet of smoked glass placed beneath it. . . . The pendulum was at that moment moving, sometimes from right to left, sometimes backwards and forwards, but with so imperceptible a movement that it could not be discerned by the naked eye. . . . Suddenly—*drin ! drin !*—there is a ringing of bells, the pendulum quivers. . . .

“A shock!” And Pippo, triumphant, rushes to the telegraph instrument to announce it.

“I did not feel anything!” said Nino d’Arco, white with terror.

And he hastened to go. But he was simply knocked to pieces by all those machines and the satisfied air of his colleague. The latter already signed himself “Director of the Meteorologico-Seismic Observatory at Pietranera,” and seemed a great personage—reflected Nino—even to him, who knew very well who he was, a telegraph clerk just like himself!

All along the homeward road, when he had finished settling accounts with the ass, he ruminated over the hundreds of francs which all that apparatus must have cost. . . . The seismographic pendulum, however, was only worth eighteen. . . . He would like to have at least a pendulum. . . . What would he do with it when he had it? No one could tell; least of all himself. But the pendulum kept vibrating in his brain all the week, backwards and forwards, right and left, scratching the smoked glass at every stroke. Nino seemed

to himself to be always standing behind the magnifying-glass, as he had done at Pietranera. It was a diabolical persecution!

He had to humble himself before his detested colleague, in order to get information, explanations and instruments; but after all, in the end, the pendulum was there in its place, near the office window. It had cost him nearly half his month's salary. But what of that? Now, he too could telegraph the most beautiful earthquakes, on occasion.

But just look at the perversity of things! That infamous pendulum—as if on purpose to spite him—remained perfectly motionless, even if one looked at it through the magnifying-glass. Nino, who passed whole days ruining his eyes with that glass, anxious to observe the first trace of movement, so as to signal it, and thus begin his competition with the Pietranera observatory, ground his teeth with rage. Especially on the days when his fortunate rival seemed to be mocking him with the ticking of the messages which announced to the Provincial Office some little shock recorded by the instruments at Pietranera. For an earthquake—a real earthquake—Nino would have given, who can tell what? perhaps his very soul. In the meantime he dreamt of earthquakes, often awaking terrified in the night, uncertain whether it were a dream, or the shock had really taken place; but the pendulum remained stern and immovable. It was enough to drive the veriest saint desperate. Ah! Was that the game? Did the earthquakes obstinately refuse to manifest themselves? Well, he would invent them. After all, who could contradict him? And so that unlucky parish, which had been for centuries quietly anchored to the rocky mountain-side, began to perform in its turn—in the Reports of the Meteorological Office at Rome—an intricate dance of shocks, slight shocks, and approaches to shocks; there was no means of keeping it still any longer. And as Nino could

not forego the glory of showing his friends the sheet where his name appeared in print beside those of several famous men of science, the report spread through the country that the mountain was moving, imperceptibly, and threatened to come down in a landslide.

"Is it really true?" the most timid came to ask.

"True, indeed!" replied Nino solemnly, and pointed to the pendulum; but he would allow no one to examine it at close quarters.

Just as though it had been done on purpose, the Pietranera observatory no longer signalled any disturbances since Golastretta had begun to amuse itself by frequent vibrations; and Pippo Corradi, suspecting the trick of his colleague, was gnawing his own heart out over all the false indications which were quietly being foisted in among the genuine ones of the official report, and making a mock of Science.

He, for his own part, did his work seriously and scrupulously, even leaving his dinner when the hour for observation came; and his reports might be called models of scientific accuracy. Ought he to denounce his colleague? to unmask him? He could not make up his mind. The latter, as bold as brass, went on making his village quake and tremble, as though it were nothing at all.

This time the proverb that "lies have short legs" did not hold good; for the lies in question reached Tacchini at Rome, and Father Denza at Moncalieri. Perhaps, even, they confused the calculations of those unfortunate scientists, who were very far from suspecting, in the remotest degree, the wickedness of Nino.

But one day, all of a sudden, the Golastretta pendulum awoke from its torpor, and began to move behind the magnifying-glass, although to the naked eye its motion was scarcely perceptible.

Nino gave a howl of joy. "At last! at last!"



To the first person who happened to come into the office he said, with a majestic sweep of the arm, "Look here!"

"What does it mean?"

"We shall have a big earthquake!" and he rubbed his hands.

"Mercy!"

The man, who had felt his head turning round with the continued agitation of the pendulum, and was struck with consternation to find that it could scarcely be perceived without the magnifier, rushed at once to spread the terrible news in streets, shops, and *cafés*. In an hour the telegraph office was invaded—besieged. Everybody wished to see with his or her own eyes, so as to be certain, and then take a resolution. And the people who had seen frightened the others with their accounts, exaggerating matters, giving explanations more terrifying than those they had received and half understood, and so increasing

the panic, which now began to seize on the most sceptical spirits. An extraordinary success for Nino d'Arco! He seemed to see before him the image of his colleague, jaundiced with envy, and again rubbed his hands with delight. Outside, the street was full of people discussing the affair with comments. Women were crying, boys shouting, "Is it still moving?" "Worse than before." "Oh! blessed Madonna!" The parish priest hastened to the spot, frightened as badly as the rest by the news which had been carried to him by the sacristan; and scarcely had he looked through the glass than he sprang from his chair as if he had felt the ground rocking under his feet.

"It is the judgment of God, gentlemen! On account of our sins, gentlemen!"

Then the people began to get away as fast as they could.

There was a banging of shutters, a hurried closing of doors, a rushing about, a shouting of each other's names. "Is it still moving?" "Worse than ever!" So that at last Nino d'Arco himself no longer felt easy. And from time to time he turned back to look once more at the pendulum, which continued to vibrate. It was the first time that Nino found himself indeed, as it were, face to face with a distant indication of earthquake, after the hundred or so of shocks, of all sorts, strengths, and sizes, which he had invented and caused to be published in the Report at Rome. And now it was not exactly an amusing thing—that dumb menace, to which his ignorance gave a false significance. Pendulum of the devil! Would it never be still? A beautiful invention of science, calculated to kill a peaceful citizen with anticipatory fear! Who ever heard of the earth being shaken without people becoming aware of it?

It seemed to him that the vibrations increased from hour to hour, and that the danger of a general fall of buildings became more imminent every minute. He was alone in the office,—there was not a soul to be seen in the street,—



every one had left the village, to seek safety in the open plain. And his duty, as telegraph operator, forbade him to move!

Towards evening he closed the office, and went out into the plain himself. The people were standing about in groups, telling their beads and chanting litanies. When they saw him they were near falling upon him, as the cause of the mischief. Was it not he who had turned the whole village upside down, with that accursed pendulum of his? The whole scene had a depressing effect on him, however much he

might try to keep up his courage, and convince his fellow-townsmen of the great benefits of his warning, which might, for all they knew, have been the saving of many lives.

But at noon on the following day nothing had yet happened.

Every quarter of an hour some one of the bravest came in from the country to the telegraph office, to find out how things were going. The pendulum still vibrated—but there were no news of the predicted earthquake.

The evening came. Not the ghost of an earth-



quake! A few, here and there, began to turn the thing into ridicule. The syndic—who had a head on his shoulders—had sent a boy to the Pietranera. When the boy returned with Pippo Corradi's answer, "It's all nonsense—make your minds easy!" there was an explosion of "Oh!—oh!—oh!" and those who had been most frightened, and felt that they had been made fools of, began to yell, "Imbecile! Blockhead! Idiot!"

They rushed in a tumultuous noisy crowd to the telegraph office; and had they not met with the lieutenant of the Carbineers, who had hastened up on receipt of a cipher telegram from the chief constable, who knows how the matter might have ended for Nino d'Arco?

"What on earth have you been doing?" said the lieutenant. "You have been disturbing the public peace."

Nino was petrified for a moment; then, seeking to excuse himself by proof positive, pointed to the pendulum.

"Well?" said the lieutenant.

"Look—it moves!"

"You must be seeing double. There is nothing moving here."

"Do look carefully."

"Allow me. . . . Nothing moving!"

In fact, the pendulum had stopped. Nino would not believe his own eyes.

"I confiscate it, for the present!" cried the lieutenant.

And, raising the glass of the case, he took out the tube in which the pendulum was fixed.

"When one is as ignorant as you, sir, . . ." Every one present applauded vigorously. "And I shall report the matter to headquarters."

To Nino it mattered nothing that the crowd should applaud and hiss, or that the lieutenant of the Carbineers should report him at headquarters. He was thinking only

of Pippo Corradi, and how he would laugh behind his back when he heard it ; and the tears stood in his eyes.

And, as though all this had not been enough, behold, on the following day, the following message clicked along the wires from Corradi :—

“To-day, 2 P.M., upward shock of first degree lasting three seconds ; followed, after interval of seven seconds, by undulatory shock, south-north, also first degree, lasting five seconds. No damage.”

“Infamous fate !” stammered Nino d’Arco. And he shut off the current, to escape from the clicks which seemed to deride him.

*Luigi Capuana.*

## QUACQUARA.



POOR Don Mario!  
 No sooner was he seen coming round the corner with his rusty, narrow-brimmed, stove-pipe hat, nearly a foot high, and his overcoat with long tails fluttering in the wind, than every one — first the boys, then the men, the loafers on Piazza Buglio, and even the gentlemen at the Casino — began to salute him, on every side, with the cry of the quail, “*Quacquarà! Quacquarà!*” just because they knew that it enraged him.

He stopped and stood at bay, staring round, brandishing his great cudgel, and shaking his head threateningly. Then he would take two or three steps forward, looking fixedly at them, in order to discover one or other of the impudent wretches who so far forgot the respect due to him, the son and grandson of lawyers—to him who stood a hundred times higher than all those gentlemen of the Casino. . . . But in vain! On the right hand and the left, before and behind, rose the shouts and whistles, “*Quacquarà! Quacquarà!*”

"Don't excite yourself! Let them shout!"

"If I do not kill some one, they will never be quiet!"

"Do you want to go to the convict prison for nothing?"

"I will send them there!"

He became red as a turkey-cock, raving and gesticulating and foaming at the mouth.

"They would be quiet enough, if you did not get angry."

"They are cowards! Why don't they come out like men, and say it to my face?"

"*Quacquarà!*"——

"Ah! would you hit a child?" This time, if they had not stopped him, he would have broken the head of the barber's boy, who had boldly approached him near enough to utter the objectionable cry under his very nose. There was trouble enough before Don Mario would let himself be dragged away into the chemist's shop, which was filled with a laughing crowd. Vito, the chemist's young man, came forward, very seriously, and said to him—

"What does it matter if they *do* say *Quacquarà* to you? You don't happen to be a quail, do you?"

Don Mario turned furious eyes on him.

"Well; it's not as if they called you a thief!"

"I am a gentleman, and the son of a gentleman."

"Well? What does *Quacquarà* mean? Nothing at all. *Quacquarà* let it be!"

The chemist and the others present were writhing in convulsions of suppressed laughter at the serious countenance of Vito, who, under the pretext of lecturing Don Mario for his folly, kept on repeating the quail's cry to his very face, without his perceiving that it was done on purpose.

"Now I," said he, "if a man were to cry *Quacquarà* after me, I would give him a halfpenny every time. *Quacquarà! Quacquarà!* Shout yourselves hoarse, if you like!"

"And, meanwhile, you scoundrel, you're repeating it to my face," yelled Don Mario, as he raised his cudgel, per-

ceiving at last that he had been made a fool of. At this point the chemist, who was terrified for the safety of his plate-glass windows, thought it time to interfere ; and, taking his arm, drew him out of the shop, condoling with his grievances, and soothing his ruffled feelings as well as he could.

“Come out this way ; no one will see you.”

“Am I to hide myself ? To please those louts ? I am a gentleman, and the son of a gentleman !”

True—very true ! The Majori had always been respectable people, son succeeding father in the notary’s office from generation to generation, up to the year 1819 ; in which year there issued forth from the infernal regions that judgment of Heaven called the Code Napoléon, specially created for the despair of the notary Majori, Don Mario’s father, who never could understand it, and was forced to retire from his profession.

“What ? No more Latin formulas ? . . . And documents to be headed ‘In the King’s Name’ ! But what has his Majesty the King to do with private contracts ?”

And he relieved his conscience by having no more to do with the whole business. And so the ink had dried up in the great brass inkstand in his office, and the quill pens were all worn out ; and the quiet in the house contrasted strangely with the bustle there had been formerly, when every one came to consult him, for he was honesty in person, and never set down on the papers a single word more or less than the interested parties wished. And thus, Don Mario, who had hitherto acted as clerk in his father’s office, and knew by heart all the Latin formulas, without understanding a syllable thereof, found his occupation gone. So did his brother Don Ignazio, who was not much more capable than himself ; and after the old notary had died of a broken heart, on account of that unholy Code which had no Latin formulas, and insisted

on having documents headed *In the King's Name*, the two brothers eked out a sordid livelihood on the little they inherited from him. But they were proud in their honourable poverty, and rigidly faithful to the past, even in their dress, continuing for a time to wear their old clothes, carefully brushed and mended, regardless of the fact that they were out of fashion and excited ridicule.

Don Ignazio, however, could not stand it long. When his beaver hat seemed to him quite useless, and his overcoat too threadbare, he bought a second-hand hat for a few pence from Don Saverio, the old-clothes dealer, and a coat which had also been worn already, but presented a better appearance than his old one. Don Mario, on the other hand, stood firm, and went about in his rusty tall hat and long coat of half a century ago, shabby and darned, but without a spot. He was not going to derogate from his past—he, the son and grandson of notaries.

Then came hard times,—bad harvests,—the epidemic of 1837,—the cholera,—the revolution of '48;—and the two brothers passed disagreeable days and still more unpleasant nights, racking their brains for the means of procuring a glass of wine for the morrow, or a little oil for the salad or the soup.

“To-morrow I will go to So-and-so,” Don Mario would say. “Meanwhile we must sweep out the house.”

They did everything themselves; and while Don Ignazio cut up an onion to put into the evening's salad, Don Mario, in his father's indoor coat, all faded and mended, began carefully to sweep the rooms like a housemaid. He dusted the rickety tables and the old ragged, leather-covered arm-chairs; and then, having gathered up all the dirt into a basket, he would cautiously open the door, to make sure there was no one within sight, and, late at night, carried it out and deposited it behind the wall of a ruined house which had become the dust-bin of the neighbourhood.

And on the way he would pick up stones, cabbage-stumps, bits of orange or pumpkin-peel, so as to clean up the street also, seeing that no one troubled about it, every one being too much occupied with his or her own business to pay any attention to cleanliness. Cleanliness was his fixed idea—indoors and out. It often happened that Don Ignazio, finding that he was late in coming home, was forced to go out and call him in to supper.

“You are not the public scavenger, are you?”

“Cleanliness is a commandment of the Lord!” Don Mario would reply.

And, having washed his hands, he sat down to the meagre supper of onion salad and bread as if it had been the daintiest of dishes.

“This is Donna Rosa’s oil; and do you know there is no more left?” said Don Ignazio one evening between two mouthfuls.

“To-morrow I will go to the Cavaliere!”

“But his father was a peasant farmer!”

“His grandfather was a day labourer!”

“And now he is made of money!”

“His grandfather became the Prince’s agent—and made his fortune.”

“Let us go to bed; the light is going out.”

They had to economise even their candles. But afterwards, in the dark, the interrupted conversation was continued—not very consecutively—from one bed to another.

“Have you seen the band in their new uniforms?”

“Yes. . . . Farmer Cola has got in a hundred bushels of grain this year.”

“Who knows if it is true? Much good may it do him!”

“To-morrow I will go to the Cavaliere for some oil.” . . .

“The wine is all gone, too.”

“I will go for the wine as well. . . . *Ave Maria!*”

“*Pater Noster!*” And so they went to sleep.



In the morning, after carefully brushing his shabby and much-mended coat and his rusty hat, Don Mario dressed hastily and began his day by going to mass at San Francesco. . . . This ceremony over, he proceeded on his errand, hugging the oil-flask tightly under his coat.

He presented himself with humble and ceremonious courtesy.

“Is the Cavaliere at home?”

“No, but his lady is.”

“Announce me to the lady.”

Now all the domestics in the place knew perfectly well the meaning of a visit from Don Mario, and at most houses they would leave him to wait in the anteroom, or say to him without more ado—

“Give me the bottle, Don Mario.”

It often happened that while they were filling it for him he could not control himself at the sight of the disorder in the room where they left him. He would mount a chair in order to remove, with the end of his stick, the cobwebs clustering on the ceiling; and if he found a broom within reach of his hand—what was to be done? he could not resist!—he began to sweep the floor, to dust the pictures, or to pick up the scraps of paper or stuff scattered about.

“What are you doing, Don Mario?”

“The Lord has commanded us to be clean. . . . Thank the lady for me!”

Donna Rosa, who was amused with him and his ways, always had him shown up to the drawing-room, and asked him to sit down.

“How are you, dear Don Mario?”

“Well, thank God. And how is your Excellency?”

“As well as most old women, dear Don Mario!”

“None are old but those that die. Your Excellency is so charitable, that you ought to be spared for a hundred years to come.”

Donna Rosa kept up the conversation as though she had no idea of the real object of this visit; and Don Mario, still hugging his bottle, awaited the favourable moment for presenting his request without appearing troublesome. From time to time, after wriggling on his chair, as if in pain, for a few minutes, he would rise, and with "Excuse me, my lady!" wipe the dust from a table, or stoop to pick up a flake of wool, or bit of thread from the floor, and throw it out of the window,—as though the sight of these things actually made him feel ill.

"Oh! never mind, Don Mario!"

"The Lord has commanded us to be clean. . . . I had come . . ."

"How does your brother like his new employment?" Donna Rosa interrupted him, one day.

"Very much indeed."

"You ought to try and get appointed inspector of weights yourself. There is one wanted at the Archi mill."

"But the addition, madam! the addition! Ignazio knows how to do it!"

• He turned up his eyes, with a sigh—as if this arithmetical process were a most complicated calculation.

"Poor Ignazio!" he went on. "He comes back from the mill so tired! Just imagine, madam—four miles uphill, on foot! . . . I had come for this. . . ."

And he produced the flask.

"With pleasure!" Who was there that could say "No" to Don Mario?

But when that unfortunate addition was mentioned, not even the gift of a bottle of wine could restore him to good humour. He had tried so many times to do an addition sum. The tens were the difficulty.

"Nine and one are ten. . . . Very good! . . . But . . . put down nought and carry one. . . . Why carry one if there are ten?"

He had found it utterly impossible to understand this. And yet he was no fool. You should have heard him read, quite correctly, all those old legal documents, with their strange Latin abbreviations, which the modern notaries and advocates could not succeed in deciphering. It is true that he recited them parrot-fashion, without understanding them; but all the same he could earn half a franc at a time when required for this service; and this meant two *litres* of wine and half a *kilo* of lamb—quite a festive meal, although, nowadays, with Don Ignazio's position, the two brothers were not quite so badly off as before.

They would even have been happy if it had not been for the irritating behaviour of the street boys. One day matters reached a crisis. Don Mario, administering a cuff to an ill-conditioned fellow who assaulted him with the cry of *Quacquarà*, received the same back with interest, and got his coat torn into the bargain. The magistrate, before whom the case was brought, kept the vagabond under arrest for a couple of hours, and got up a subscription at the Casino, to present Don Mario with a new coat and hat. But the latter would never consent to be measured for it, and when the coat—cut out by guess-work—was sent him, together with the most spick and span of hats, he thanked the donors politely, and sent the whole back.

“You have been a fool!” said his brother, who, on his return from the mill that evening, found him intent on repairing his ancient garment. “You can't go out again in that.”

“I shall stay at home,” replied Don Mario loftily.

And he was no longer seen about the town.

He passed his days sitting on the front doorstep, talking to the neighbours, or wandering through the many empty rooms of the dilapidated house. No repairs had been undertaken for years past; the shutters were loose on their hinges. Two floors had given way, and had to be passed

by means of planks, laid like bridges from one room to another; and the tiles were off the roof in many places, so that some of the upper rooms were flooded when it rained.

"Sell half the house," said one of the neighbours; "it is much too large for you two alone!"

But that evening, discussing the matter at supper, Don Mario and Don Ignazio found themselves greatly embarrassed.

"Sell! Easily said. . . . But what? The room that had been their father's office?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Don Mario indignantly.

It is true that the big volumes, bound in dark leather, were no longer in the shelves all round the walls. The government had taken possession of them, as though they had been its property, and not that of the notaries, who had drawn up all those documents. But what matter? The shelves, moth-eaten and rickety, reduced to receptacles for dishes, frying-pans, and utensils of all sorts, remained, to their eyes, living witnesses, as it were, to past glories. The two brothers looked at one another.

"Was it possible? . . . Well. . . . What *should* they sell? Their grandmother's room?"

A mysterious chamber, which had been kept locked for seventy years, and of which now even the key was lost. Their grandfather's wife—a saint on earth—had died there, and the widower had ordered it to be shut up, in sign of perpetual mourning. Every night the mice kept up a terrible racket there. But what matter? A master notary—one of the Majori—had willed that no one should open it and no one had done so. Were *they* to profane it? They were both agreed . . . it was impossible!

"What then? The portrait-room?"

There were arranged on its walls half-a-dozen canvases, blackened with years and smoke, on which you could make out—here, the severe profile of Don Gasparo Majori, 1592; there, the grey eyes, white moustache, and pointed beard

of Don Carlo, 1690 ; beside it, the wig and round shaven face of Don Paolo, 1687 ; and further on, the lean and narrow head of Don Antonio, 1805, framed in an enormous collar, with white neckcloth, and showy waistcoat with watch-chain and seals dangling from its pockets. Don Mario knew by heart the life, death, and miracles of each one, and so did Don Ignazio.

Could they turn them out of their own house? No ; it was impossible. Better let the whole fall into ruins.

They went to bed and put out the light.

"Well, it will last our time. We are old, Mario !"

"You are two years older than I !"

". . . To-morrow, Notary Patrizio is coming to get an old deed read out to him."

"So we shall be able to buy half a *kilo* of meat."

"Saverio the butcher cheats in his weights. I shall keep my eyes open."

"I have lent the rolling-pin to Comare Nina."

"I will get the wine from Scatá. . . . Vittoria wine this time. . . . *Pater Noster* !"

"*Ave Maria* !"

So they went to sleep.

They were growing old. Ignazio was right.

Don Mario sometimes wondered which of the two would die first, and the thought left him sad and depressed.

"I am the younger. . . . But, after me, the house will go to distant relatives, . . . they will divide it up and sell it. . . . But, after all, what does it matter to us? We shall both be gone then. . . . We are the real Majori ; when we are dead, the world is dead !"

Yet he went on sweeping out the tumble-down old house with the same tenderness and care as ever, removing the cobwebs from the walls, and dusting the moth-eaten and ragged remnants of furniture ; driving a nail into the back

of a chair or the leg of a table ; pasting a sheet of oiled paper in the place of a missing window-pane, and carrying out the dust and rubbish as usual, late at night.

Moreover, since he now frequently went to sleep in the daytime—with the loneliness, and having nothing to do—he sometimes passed the night out of doors, sweeping the whole length and breadth of the street, and pleased to hear the wonder of the neighbourhood next morning, and have people say to him—

“The angel passed by last night. Is it so, Don Mario?”

He would smile, without replying. He was now quite resigned to his voluntary imprisonment, as he could no longer wear his old coat and hat, which were still there, quite spotless and free from dust, though perfectly useless.

One day, however, Don Mario lost all his peace of mind.

Standing at a window in the portrait-room, he had been looking along the street at Reina's house, with its fantastically-sculptured gateway and the twisted stone monsters.

“A fine palace—quite a royal one,” said Don Mario, who had never seen anything richer or more beautiful in his life.

“Yet, how was it the proprietor had never noticed those tufts of pellitory growing between the carvings over the arch of the great gateway, quite spoiling the building? It was a sin and a shame!”

Scarcely had Don Ignazio come home from the mill that evening, tired and out of breath, when his brother said to him—

“Look here ; you ought to go to Signor Reina. He is letting nasty weeds grow between the carvings of the gateway, under the middle balcony. It quite worries one to see them.”

“Well?”

"You ought to tell him of it—at least when you meet him again."

"I will tell him."

Don Ignazio, quite worn out with his long walk, had other matters to think of; he wanted to have his supper and go to bed.

But from that day he too got no peace. Every evening, when he came home, Don Mario never failed to ask him, even before he had laid aside his stick: "Have you spoken to Reina?"

"No."

"Go and tell him at once. It is a pity; those weeds are spoiling the building."

They were quite an eyesore to him; he could not make out how Reina could put up with such a sacrilege. And several times a day he would go to the attic window, mounting a pair of steps at the risk of his neck, in order to look out. Those weeds were always there! They grew from day to day; they made great bushes that waved in the wind. If they had been fungous growths in the interior of his own system, he could not have suffered more from them.

"Have you told Reina about them?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He swore at me."

That night Don Mario never closed his eyes. As soon as he found that his brother was snoring, then he lit the lamp, dressed himself, took the steps on his shoulder, which they nearly dislocated, and made his way to Reina's house, keeping in the shadow of the wall, and avoiding the moonlight, as if he had been a burglar.

As indeed the gendarmes thought him when they came upon him, perched on the top of the gateway, pulling away for dear life at the parasitic herbs, in spite of the proprietor, who did not care whether they grew there or not.

"What are you doing up there?"

"I am pulling  
out these weeds."

"Come down."

"Let me finish."

"Come down,  
I tell you!"

At this uncere-  
monious sum-  
mons poor Don





Mario had to descend, leaving several bushes of pellitory to spoil the beautiful building unchecked. . . .

They were nearly taking him off to the police station ! . . .  
And all for a good action ! He died within three months,  
with the nightmare of those weeds weighing on his heart.  
. . . Poor old Don Mario !

*Luigi Capuana.*

### *THE EXCAVATIONS OF MASTRO ROCCO.*

EVER since he had taken it into his head to “take off the charm,” in the *Grotto of the Seven Gates*, Mastro Rocco had given up his pork-butcher’s shop, and was always on the top of the hill, baking his hump-back in the sun, digging here and there from morning to night, to find some trace of the treasure which the Saracens had enchanted in that neighbourhood.

Mastro Rocco used to talk as though he had seen it with his little red-rimmed eyes, and touched it with the horny hands which now wielded the spade both day and night, excavating ancient tombs,—by day on his own little plot of ground which looked like the destruction of Jerusalem—all yawning holes and heaps of earth ;—by night, on his neighbours’ farms, by moonlight, or by that of a lantern, when there was no moon ; for the neighbours did not like their ground cut up, and laughed at his finds of useless earthen vessels, and old coins with which you could not even buy a pennyworth of bread.

Mastro Rocco laughed to himself at these ignorant rustics who understood nothing. *He* knew, and had proved it, that those earthen vases, especially if they had figures on them, and that oxidised money, could be speedily converted into good coin of the realm, when he carried them to Baron Padullo, who put on his spectacles to examine them, and

then opened certain huge books, as big as missals, and full of pictures, to make comparisons. Thus he had become convinced that the trade of selling ham and sausages was far inferior to that of digging up antiquities. . . .

One day he found some beautiful terra-cotta figures, for which the baron paid him ten *scudi*. Who could tell what they might be worth, when the old gentleman could bring himself to give as much as that.

After that he went much more frequently to the baron's house, accompanied by a little old man, whom Mastro Rocco called his assistant. But they always brought figures exactly like the first ones, all soiled with the earth they had been dug from ; and at last, one day, the baron said—

“Mastro Rocco, if you do not find something different, you might as well save yourself the trouble of coming. Look here, I have a whole cupboard full of these.”

He pointed to a number of statuettes of Ceres, seated with her hands on her knees, arranged in rows behind the glass doors, along with Greek vases, lamps, bronzes of every sort, and antique coins of every size. . . .

It was a long time before Mastro Rocco was seen again at the baron's. When he next presented himself, along with the little old man, he carefully set down a basket full of hay which he had carried up under his arm, and began to gesticulate vehemently as he pointed out the precious objects reposing in the basket and covered with the hay.

“Ah ! *signor barone* ! what a novelty ! what a novelty ! Your worship will be enchanted, upon my word of honour !”

The baron had put on his spectacles in order the better to admire ; and when he saw some half-dozen figures of Ceres, exactly like the others, but with unmistakable pipes in their mouths, instead of being enchanted, he roared aloud—

"Ah! Mastro Rocco, you thief! Ah! you scoundrel!"

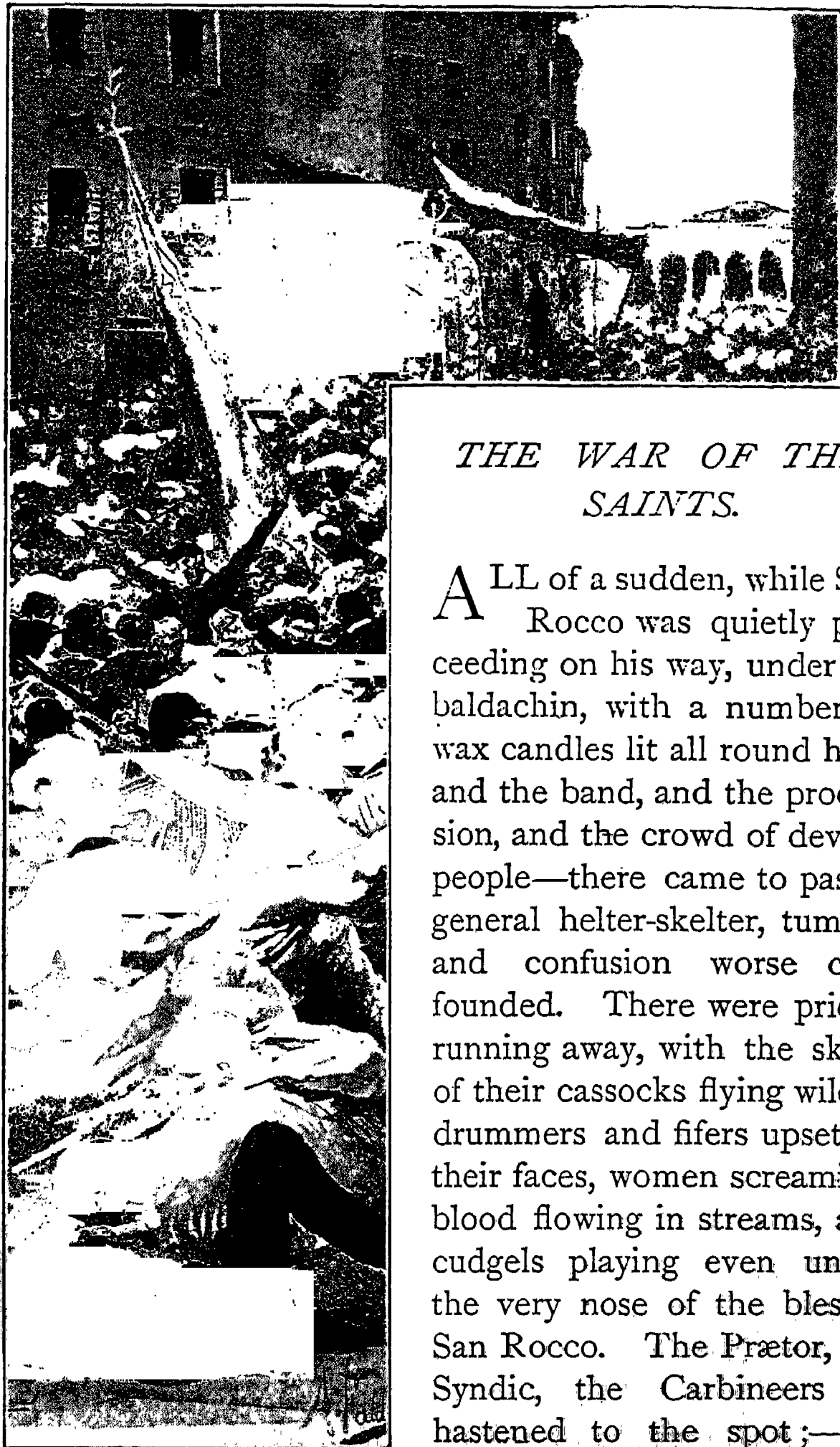
And he would have put a pistol-bullet through the head of each if they had not jumped from the window regardless of possible broken necks; though, after all, it was not very high. Mastro Rocco only broke his arm, and had a mass said to his patron saint for assistance rendered in this



extremity. With his arm in a sling he imprecated curses on his rascally partner, who had suggested the charming novelty of the pipes!

"Was it not enough to have imitated the form of the little idols well enough to take in even Baron Padullo?"

*Luigi Capuana.*



*THE WAR OF THE  
SAINTS.*

ALL of a sudden, while San Rocco was quietly proceeding on his way, under his baldachin, with a number of wax candles lit all round him, and the band, and the procession, and the crowd of devout people—there came to pass a general helter-skelter, tumult, and confusion worse confounded. There were priests running away, with the skirts of their cassocks flying wildly, drummers and fifers upset on their faces, women screaming, blood flowing in streams, and cudgels playing even under the very nose of the blessed San Rocco. The Prætor, the Syndic, the Carbineers all hastened to the spot;—the

broken bones were carried off to the hospital,—a few of the more riotous members of the community were marched off to pass the night in prison,—the saint returned to his church at a run rather than a processional step,—and the festival ended like the comedies of Pulcinella.

And all this through the spite of the people in the parish of San Pasquale. That year the pious souls of San Rocco had been spending the very eyes out of their heads in order to do things in grand style;—they had sent for the band from town,—they had let off more than two thousand squibs,—and they had now got a new banner, all embroidered with gold, which, it was said, weighed over a quintal, and tossed up and down in the midst of the crowd, like a wave crested with golden foam. Which thing, by sheer contrivance of the Evil One, was a thorn in the sides of the followers of S. Pasquale,—so that one of the latter at last lost patience, and began, pale as death, to yell at the top of his voice, “*Viva San Pasquale!*” Then it was that the cudgels began to fly.

Because, after all, to go and cry “*Viva San Pasquale*” in the very face of San Rocco, is really a good, sound, indisputable provocation;—it is just like going and spitting in a man’s house, or amusing yourself by pinching the girl who is walking arm-in-arm with him. In such a case there is no longer any sense of right and wrong,—and that slight amount of respect which people still have for the other saints—who, after all, are all related to each other—is trampled under foot. If it happens in church, seats are flung into the air,—if during a procession, there are showers of torch-stumps like swarms of bats, and at table the dishes fly.

“*Santo diavolone!*” cried Compare Nino, panting, heated, and dishevelled. “I’d like to know, who has the face to cry *Viva San Pasquale* again!”

“I!” yelled Turi the tanner, who looked forward to being his brother-in-law, quite beside himself with rage, and

nearly blinded by a chance blow received in the *mêlée*.  
“*Viva San Pasquale* till death!”

“For the love of Heaven! for the love of Heaven!” shrieked his sister Saridda, throwing herself between her brother and her betrothed. All three had been going for a walk in all love and good fellowship up to that moment.

Compare Nino, the expectant bridegroom, kept crying in derision, “Long live my boots—*viva San Stivale!*”

“Take that!” howled Turi, foaming at the mouth, his eyes swollen and his face like a tomato. “Take that for San Rocco, you and your boots! There!”

In this way they exchanged blows which would have felled an ox, till their friends succeeded in separating them by dint of cuffs and kicks. Saridda, who by this time had grown excited on her own account, now cried *Viva San Pasquale*, and was very nearly coming to blows with her lover, as if they had already been husband and wife.

At such times parents quarrel most desperately with their sons and daughters, and wives separate from their husbands, if by misfortune a woman of the parish of San Pasquale has married a man from San Rocco.

“I won’t hear another word about that man!” cried Saridda, standing with her hands on her hips, to the neighbours, when they asked her how it happened that the marriage had not come off. “I won’t have him, if they give him to me dressed in gold and silver from head to foot! Do you hear?”

“Saridda may stay where she is till she turns mouldy, for all I care!” said Compare Nino, in his turn, as he was getting the blood washed from his face at the public-house. “A parcel of beggars and cowards, over in the tanner’s quarter! I must have been drunk when it came into my head to look for a sweetheart over there!”

“Since it is this way,” had been the Syndic’s conclusion, “and they can’t carry a saint out into the square without

sticks and fighting, so that it's perfectly beastly,—I will have no more festivals, nor processions, nor services ; and if they bring out so much as one single candle—what you may call a candle—I'll have them every one in gaol."

In time, the matter became important ; for the bishop of the diocese had granted to the priests of San Pasquale the privilege of wearing copes. The parishioners of San Rocco, whose priests had no copes, had even gone to Rome to raise an outcry at the foot of the Holy Father, carrying with them documents on stamped paper, and everything else ; but all had been in vain, for their adversaries of the lower town—who, as every one remembered, had once been without shoes to their feet—had now grown as rich as Jews, through this new industry of tanning. And, in this world, one knows that justice is bought and sold like the soul of Judas.

At San Pasquale they were awaiting Monsignor's delegate, who was a person of importance, and had silver buckles on his shoes weighing half a pound apiece—and a fine sight they were to see—and he was coming to bring the copes to the canons. And for this reason, they, in their turn, had now sent for the band, and they were going to meet Monsignor's delegate three miles outside the town ; and it was said that in the evening there were to be fireworks in the square, with *Viva San Pasquale* over and over again, in letters as big as those on a shop-front.

The inhabitants of the upper town were therefore in a great ferment ; and some, more excited than others, were trimming certain staves of pear and cherry wood, as big as clothes-props, and muttering—

"If there is to be music, we shall want to beat time !"

The Bishop's delegate ran a great risk of coming out of his triumphal entry with broken bones. But the reverend gentleman was cunning enough to leave the band waiting for him outside the town, while he, taking a short cut,

quietly walked to the parish priest's house, whither he summoned the principal men of the two parties.

When these gentlemen found themselves face to face—after all this time that the feud had lasted—each man began to look into the whites of his neighbour's eyes, as if he could scarcely keep his nails out of them; and it required all the authority of his Reverence—who had put on his new cloth soutane for the occasion—to get the ices and the other refreshments served without accidents.

“That's right!” said the Syndic approvingly, with his nose in his glass. “When you want me for the cause of peace, you'll always find me on the spot.”

The delegate, in fact, said that he had come for the sake of conciliation, with the olive-branch in his mouth, like Noah's dove, and made his exhortation, distributing smiles and hand-clasps all round, and saying, “Gentlemen, will you do me the favour of coming into the sacristy to take a cup of chocolate on the day of the festival?”

“Do leave the festival alone!” said the Vice-Prætor; “if not, more mischief will come of it.”

“Mischief will come of it if this tyranny is to be allowed—if a man is not to be free to amuse himself as he likes, and pay for it with his own money!” exclaimed Bruno, the carter.

“I wash my hands of the matter. The orders of the Government are explicit. If you celebrate the festival I shall send for the Carbineers. I am for order.”

“I will answer for order!” said the Syndic, tapping the ground for emphasis with his umbrella, and looking slowly around.

“Bravo! as if we did not know that it is your brother-in-law Bruno who blows the bellows for you in the Town Council!” retorted the Vice-Prætor.

“And you have joined the opposition party only on account of that bye-law about the washing, which you can't get over!”



"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" entreated the delegate. "We shall do nothing if we go on in this way."

"We'll have a revolution, that we will!" shouted Bruno, gesticulating with his hands in the air.

Fortunately the parish priest had quietly put away the cups and glasses, and the sacristan had rushed off at the top of his speed to dismiss the band, who, having heard of the delegate's arrival, were already hastening up to welcome him, blowing their cornets and clarionets.

"In this way we shall do nothing at all!" muttered the delegate, worried to death by the thought that the harvest was already ripe for cutting in his own village, while he was wasting his time here talking to Compare Bruno and the Vice-Prætor, who were ready to tear one another's souls out. "What is this story about the prohibition of the washing?"

"The usual interference. Nowadays one can't hang a handkerchief out of the window to dry without getting fined for it. The Vice-Prætor's wife—feeling safe because her husband was in a position of trust, for till now people always had some little regard for the authorities—used to hang out the whole week's washing—it was not much to boast of—on the terrace. . . . But now, under the new law, that's a mortal sin; and now even the dogs and fowls are prohibited, and the other animals<sup>1</sup>—saving your presence—that used to do the scavenging in the streets; and now the first rain that comes it will be Heaven's mercy if we don't all get smothered in the filth. The real truth is that Bruno, the assessor, has a grudge against the Vice-Prætor, on account of a certain decision he has given against him."

The delegate, in order to conciliate the local mind, used to sit boxed up in his confessional, like an owl in its nest, from morning till evening, and all the women were eager to be shriven by the Bishop's representative, who had powers

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, the pigs, which, for some reason or other, Italians do not think fit to mention in polite society.

of plenary absolution for all sorts of sins, just as though he had been Monsignor in person.

"Your Reverence," said Saridda, with her nose at the grating, "Compare Nino makes me commit sin every Sunday in church."

"In what way, my daughter?"

"He was to have married me, before there was all this talk in the place; but now that the marriage is broken off, he goes and stands near the high altar, and stares at me, and laughs with his friends, all the time holy mass is going on."

And when his Reverence tried to touch Nino's heart, the countryman replied—

"No, it is she who turns her back on me whenever she sees me—just as if I were a beggar!"

He, on the other hand, if Gnà Saridda passed across the square on Sundays, gave himself airs as if he had been the brigadier, or some other great personage, and did not even seem to see her. Saridda was exceedingly busy preparing little coloured paper-lanterns, and put them out in a row on the window-sill, in his very face, under the pretext of hanging them out to dry. Once they found themselves together in church, at a christening, and took no notice of each other, just as though they had never met before; nay, Saridda even went so far as to flirt with the godfather.

"A poor sort of a godfather!" sneered Nino. "Why the child's a girl! And when a girl is born, even the beams of the roof break down!"

Saridda turned away, and pretended to be talking to the baby's mother.

"What's bad does not always come to do harm. Sometimes, when you think you've lost a treasure, you ought to thank God and St. Pasquale; for you can never say you know a person till you have eaten seven measures of salt."

"After all, one must take troubles as they come, and the

worst possible way is to worry one's self about things which are not worth the trouble. When one Pope's' dead they make another."

"It's fore-ordained what sort of natures children are to be born with, and it's just like that with marriages. It's far better to marry a man who really cares for you and has no other ends to serve, even though he has no money or fields, or mules or anything." . . .

On the square the drum was beating to give notice of the festival.

"The Syndic says we shall have the festival," was the murmur that went through the crowd.

"I'll go to law till doomsday, if it should leave me as poor as holy Job, with nothing left but my shirt; but that five francs' fine I will not pay! not if I had to leave directions about it in my will!"

"Confound it all!" exclaimed Nino. "What sort of a festival are they going to have, if we are all to die of hunger this year?"

Since March not a drop of rain had fallen, and the yellow corn, which crackled like tinder, was "dying of thirst." Bruno, the carter, however, said that when San Pasquale was carried out in procession it would rain for certain. But what did he care about rain? or all the tanners of his neighbourhood either? In fact they carried San Pasquale in procession to east and to west, and set him upon a hill to bless the country on a stifling May day, when the sky was covered with clouds,—one of those days when the farmers are ready to tear their hair before the burnt-up fields, and the ears of corn droop as if they were dying.

"A curse on San Pasquale!" cried Nino, spitting in the air, and rushing about among his crops like a madman. "You have ruined me, San Pasquale; you've left me nothing but the reaping-hook to cut my throat with!"

The upper town was a desolate place enough. It was one

of those long years when the hunger begins in June, and the women stand at their doors with their hair hanging about their shoulders—doing nothing—staring with fixed eyes. Gnà Saridda, hearing that Compare Nino's mule was to be sold in the public square, to pay the rent of his farm, felt her anger melt away in an instant, and sent her brother Turi in hot haste, with the few *soldi* they had put aside, to help him.

Nino was in one corner of the square, with his eyes averted and his hands in his pockets, while they were selling his mule, with all its ornaments and the new head-stall.

"I don't want anything," he replied sullenly. "My arms are still left me, please God. A fine saint that San Pasquale of yours, eh?"

Turi turned his back on him, to avoid unpleasantness, and went on his way. But the truth is that people's minds were thoroughly exasperated, now that they had carried San Pasquale in procession to east and west, with no more result than that. The worst of it was that many from the parish of San Rocco had been induced to walk with the procession too, thrashing themselves like asses, and with crowns of thorns on their heads, for the sake of their crops. Now they relieved their feelings in exceedingly bad language; and the Bishop's delegate was obliged to leave the town, as he entered it, on foot, and without the band.

The vice-prætor, by way of retaliation on his opponent, telegraphed that people's minds were excited, and the public peace compromised; so that one fine day a report went through the town that the soldiers had arrived, and every one could go and see them.

"They have come on account of the cholera," others said, however. "Down in the city, they say, the people are dying like flies."

The chemist put up the chain of his shop door, and the

doctor left the place as speedily as possible, to escape being knocked on the head.<sup>1</sup>

“It will not come to anything,” said the few who had remained in the place, having been unable to fly into the country like the rest. “The blessed San Rocco will watch over his own town.”

Even the lower town folks had begun to go barefoot to San Rocco’s church. But not long after that, deaths began to come thick and fast. They said of one man that he was a glutton, and died of eating too many prickly pears, and of another, that he had come in from the country after nightfall.<sup>2</sup> But, in short, there was the cholera, there was no disguising it, —in spite of the soldiers, and in the very teeth of San Rocco, —notwithstanding the fact that an old woman in the odour of sanctity had dreamed that the saint himself had said to her—

“Have no fear of the cholera, for I am looking after that. I am not like that useless old ass of a San Pasquale.”

Nino and Turi had not met since the mule was sold; but scarcely had the former heard that the brother and sister were both ill, than he hastened to their house, and found Saridda, black in the face, and her features all distorted, in a corner of the room. Her brother, who was with her, was recovering, but could not tell what to do for her, and was nearly beside himself with despair.

“Ah! thief of a San Rocco,” groaned Nino. “I never expected this. Gnà Saridda, don’t you know me any more? Nino, your old friend Nino.”

Saridda looked at him with eyes so sunken that one had to hold a lantern to her face before one could see them, and Nino felt his own running over.

“Ah! San Rocco,” said he, “this is a worse trick than the one San Pasquale played me!”

<sup>1</sup> This is what usually happens when there is an outbreak of cholera in Southern Italy.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.*, that he had really died of malarial fever.

However, Saridda in time got better, and as she was standing at the door, with her head tied up in a handkerchief, and her face yellow as new wax, she said to Nino—

“San Rocco has worked a miracle for me, and you ought to come too, and carry a candle at his festival.”

Nino's heart was too full to speak, and he nodded assent. But before the festival came round, he too was taken with the pestilence, and lay at the point of death. Saridda tore her face with her nails, and said that she wanted to die with him, and she would cut off her hair and have it buried with him, and no one should ever look her in the face again as long as she lived.



“No, no,” replied Nino, his face all drawn with agony. “Your hair will grow again, but it will be I that will never see you again, for I shall be dead.”

“A fine miracle that San Rocco has worked for you!” said Turi, by way of comforting him.

Both of them slowly recovered; and when they sat sunning themselves, with their backs to the wall and very long faces, kept throwing San Rocco and San Pasquale in each other's teeth.

One day Bruno, the carter, coming back from the

country after the cholera was over, passed by them, and said—

“We’re going to have a grand festival to thank San Pasquale for having saved us from the cholera. We shall have no more demagogues and no more opposition, now that the vice-prætor is dead. He has left the quarrel behind him in his will.”

“All very well ; a festival for the dead !” sneered Nino.

“Perhaps it was San Rocco that kept you alive ?”

“There !—do have done with it !” cried Saridda. “If you don’t, we shall need another cholera to make peace between you !”

*Giovanni Verga.*

### *HIS REVERENCE.*

HE no longer went about now with the long beard and scapulary of the begging friar. He got shaved every Sunday, and went for a walk in his best soutane of fine cloth, with his silk-lined cloak over his arm. When he looked at his fields, his vineyards, his cattle, and his ploughmen, with his hands in his pockets and his pipe in his mouth, if he had remembered the time when he washed up the dishes for the Capuchin fathers, and they put him into the frock out of charity, he would have crossed himself with his left hand.

But if they had not taught him, for charity’s sake, to read and write and say mass, he would never have succeeded in fixing himself in the best property in the village, nor in getting into his books the names of all those tenants who worked away and prayed for a good harvest for him, and then blasphemed like Turks when settling-day came round. “Look at what I am, and don’t ask who my parents were,” says the proverb. As for his parents, every one knew about

them; his mother swept out the house for him. His Reverence was not ashamed of his family—not he; and when he went to play at cards with the Baroness, he made his brother wait for him in the anteroom, with the big lantern to light him home with. . . . He was popular as a confessor, and always ready for a little paternal gossip with his female penitents, after they had relieved their consciences and emptied their pockets, of their own and other people's sins. You could always pick up some useful information, especially if you were given to speculating in agricultural matters, in return for your blessing!

Good gracious! He did not pretend to be a saint—not he! Holy men usually died of hunger—like the vicar, who celebrated, even when his masses were not paid for, and went about poor people's houses in a ragged soutane which was a perfect scandal to religion. His Reverence wanted to get on, and get on he did, with the wind right aft, though a little hampered at first by that unlucky monk's frock, which would get in his way, till he escaped from it by means of a suit before the Royal Courts. The rest of the brethren backed him up in his application, only for the sake of getting rid of him; for, as long as he was in the monastery, there was a free fight in the refectory every time a new Provincial had to be elected, and the forms and dishes flew about with such good-will that Father Battistino, who was sturdy as a muleteer, had been half-killed, and Father Giammaria, the guardian, had had his teeth knocked down his throat. His Reverence, after having stirred up the fire all he could, always retired to his cell on those occasions, and remained quiet there; and it was in this way that he had succeeded in becoming "His Reverence" with a complete set of teeth, which served him exceedingly well; while of Father Giammaria, who had been the man to get that scorpion up his sleeve, every one said: "Serves him right!" And Father Giammaria was still only guardian of the



Capuchins, without a shirt to his back or a sou in his pocket,—hearing confessions for the love of God, and making soup for the poor.

When his Reverence was a boy, and saw his brother—the one who now carried the lantern—breaking his back with digging, and his sisters finding no husbands who would take them even at a gift, and his mother spinning in the dark to save lamp-oil, he said, “I want to be a priest.” His family sold their mule and their little plot of ground to send him to school, in the hope that if ever they attained to having a priest in the house, they would get something better than the land and the mule. But more than that was required to keep him at the seminary. Then the boy began to hang about the monastery, hoping to be taken on as a novice; and one day when the Provincial was expected, and they were busy in the kitchen, they called him in to help. Father Giammaria, a kind-hearted old fellow, said to him, “Would you like to stay here?—so you shall.” And Fra Carmelo, the porter—who was bored to death, sitting for hours on the cloister wall, with nothing to do, swinging one sandal against the other—patched him up a scapulary out of old rags which had been hung out on the fig-tree to scare away the sparrows. His mother, his brother, and sister protested that if he became a monk it was all up with them—they would lose the money they had paid for his schooling, and never get a brass farthing out of him in return. But he shrugged his shoulders and replied, “It’s a fine thing if a man is not to follow the vocation to which God has called him.”

Father Giammaria had taken a fancy to him because he was active and handy in the kitchen, and at all other work; and served mass as though he had never done anything else in his life, with his eyes cast down, and his lips primmed up like a seraph. Now that he no longer served the mass, he still had the same downcast eye and compressed lips, when it

was a question of some scandal among the gentry, or of the common lands being put up to auction, or of swearing the truth before the magistrate.

No one dared to go to law with him; and if he cast his eyes on a farm for sale, or on a lot of the common land up at auction, the magnates of the place themselves, if they ventured to bid against him, did so with obsequious bows, offering him pinches of snuff. One day he and no less a person than the Baron himself were at it a whole day—pull devil, pull baker. The Baron was doing the amiable, and his Reverence, seated opposite to him, with his cloak gathered up between his legs, at every advance in the bidding offered him his silver snuff-box, sighing, “What are you going to do about it, Baron?” At last the lot was knocked down to him, and the Baron took his pinch of snuff, green with vexation.

This sort of thing quite met the views of the peasants; they were used to seeing the big dogs fight among themselves over a good bone, and leave nothing for the little ones to gnaw. But what made them complain was that this man of God ground them down worse than the very Anti-christ, when they had to share the crops with him; and he had no scruples about seizing his neighbour's goods, because the apparatus of the confessional was all in his hands, and if he fell into mortal sin he could easily give himself absolution. “It is everything to have the priest in one's own house,” they sighed. And the shrewdest of them denied themselves the very bread out of their mouths, so as to send one of their sons to the seminary.

“When one gives himself up to the land, one has to do it altogether,” his Reverence used to say, as an excuse for considering no one. The mass itself he only celebrated on Sundays, except when there was nothing else to do; he was not one of those wretched starveling priests who have to run after the three *tari* of the mass fee. He had no need

of it. So much so that the Bishop, arriving at his house on a pastoral visit, and finding his breviary covered with dust, wrote thereon with his finger, "*Deo gratias!*" But his Reverence had other things to think of besides wasting his time in reading the breviary, and laughed at the Bishop's reproof. If the breviary was covered with dust, his oxen were sleek and shining, his sheep were thick in fleece, and the crops as tall as a man, so that his tenants, at any rate, could enjoy the sight of them, and build fine castles in the air—till they had to settle accounts with their landlord. It was a relief to their hearts, poor souls. "Crops that are like witchcraft! The Lord must have passed by them in the night! One can see that they belong to a man of God, and it is a good thing to work for him who has the mass and the blessing in his hand!" In May, at the season when they watched the sky with anxious looks for every passing cloud, they knew that their landlord was saying mass for the harvest, and was a better protection against the Evil Eye and the bad season than pictures of saints or blessed loaves. As for the latter, his Reverence would not have them scattered about among the crops, because, as he said, they only served to attract sparrows and other noxious birds. Of sacred pictures he had his pockets full; he got as many as he wanted, of the best kind, in the sacristy, without spending a penny, and made presents of them to his labourers.

But at harvest-time he came riding up on horseback, along with his brother, who acted as his bailiff, with his gun over his shoulder, and never left the spot. He slept out in the fields, in spite of the malaria, so as to look after his interests, without troubling himself about God or man. The poor wretches who, in the fine season, had forgotten the hard days of the winter, remained open-mouthed, hearing him run over the litany of their debts. "So many pounds of beans that your wife came to fetch at the time of the

snow. So many faggots handed over to your son. So many bushels of grain you have had in advance, for seed, with interest, at so much a month. Now make up the account." A confused account enough. In that year of dearth, when Uncle Carmenio had left his sweat and his health in his Reverence's fields, he was forced, when harvest came, to leave his donkey there too, to pay his debts, and went off empty-handed, with ugly words in his mouth—blasphemies that were enough to freeze your very blood. His Reverence, who was not there to hear confessions, let him swear,—and led the ass into his own stable.

But after 1860, when heresy had triumphed, what good did all his power and influence do him? The country people learning to read and write, and able to add up accounts better than he himself; parties fighting for office in the municipal government, and sharing the spoils without a consideration in the world for any one but themselves; the next beggar in the street able to get legal advice for nothing, if he had a quarrel with you, and force you to pay the costs alone! A priest was nothing whatever nowadays—either for the judge or the militia captain; he could no longer, by dropping a hint, get people imprisoned if they failed in respect to him; in fact, he was good for nothing but to say mass and hear confessions, just as though he were a servant of the public. The judge was afraid of the papers—of public opinion—of what Tom, Dick, and Harry would say—and balanced his decisions like Solomon! They even envied his Reverence the property he had acquired in the sweat of his brow; they had "overlooked" him and cast spells on him; the little he ate at dinner tortured him at night; while his brother, who led a hard life and dined on bread and garlic, had the digestion of an ostrich, and knew very well that, in a hundred years' time, when he, the priest, was dead, he would be his heir, and find himself rich without lifting a finger. His mother, poor body, was past work now

—she survived only to suffer herself and be a trouble to other people—helpless in her bed with paralysis; she had to be waited on, instead of waiting on him. Everything went wrong in these days.

“There’s no religion now—no justice—no anything!” he would grumble, as he was growing old. “Now everybody wants to have his say. Those who have nothing want to grab your share. ‘Get out of that and let me get in!’ That’s it! They’d like to reduce the priests to sacristans—leave them nothing to do but say mass and sweep out the church. They don’t want to obey God’s commandments any more—that’s what’s the matter with *them*!”

*G. Verga.*

### *PADRON 'NTONI'S POLITICS.*

. . . PADRON 'NTONI knew nothing about politics, and contented himself with minding his own affairs, for he used to say, “He who has charge of a house cannot sleep when he pleases,” and “He who commands has to give account.”

In December 1863, 'Ntoni, the eldest of his grandsons, had been called out for the naval conscription. Padron 'Ntoni went at once to all the big-wigs of the village, thinking that they would be able to help him. But Don Giammaria the priest said that it served him right, and that this was the fruit of that revolution of Satan they had brought about when they hoisted the tricolour on the church tower. On the other hand, Don Franco the chemist began to laugh under his great beard, and assured Padron 'Ntoni, rubbing his hands, that as soon as they were able to rig up a bit of a republic, which was what was wanted, every one who had to do with the conscription and the taxes should be kicked out; that there would then be no more soldiers, but

every man in the country would go to war if it were needed. Then Padron 'Ntoni prayed and entreated him to get the Republic made soon—before his grandson 'Ntoni had to go for a soldier, just as though Don Franco had the Republic in his pocket, insomuch that the chemist ended by losing his temper. Then Don Silvestro, the Syndic's secretary, nearly killed himself with laughing, and said that a nice little sum paid into the pockets of such and such personages he knew of would have the effect of producing in 'Ntoni some defect which would make him ineligible for service.

*G. Verga.*

*MASTRO PEPPE'S MAGIC.*

MASTRO PEPPE LA BRAVETTA was a stout, stupid, good-natured man, living in Pescara, who sold pots and pans, and was terribly in awe of his wife, the severe and



miserly Donna Pelagia, who ruled him with a rod of iron. Besides the income derived from his business, he possessed a piece of land on the other side of the river which produced enough to keep a pig. To this property the couple were wont to repair every January, to preside over the killing and salting of the pig which had been fattening through the year.

Now one year it so happened that Pelagia was not very well, and La Bravetta went to attend the execution alone. And to him, in the course of the afternoon, came two of his friends, graceless vagabonds, Matteo Puriello, nicknamed Ciávola, who was a poacher, and Biagio Quaglia, better known as Il Ristabilito, whose most serious occupation was that of playing the guitar at weddings and on other festive occasions.

When he saw these two approaching he welcomed them enthusiastically, and then, leading them into the building where the wonderful pig was laid out on the table, asked—

“What do you say to this, now? Isn’t he a beauty? What do you think of him?”

The two friends contemplated the pig in silent wonder, and Ristabilito clicked his tongue appreciatively against his palate. Ciávola asked, “What are you going to do with it?”

“Salt it down,” replied La Bravetta, in a voice which trembled with greedy delight of future banquets.

“Going to salt it?” cried Ristabilito suddenly. “Going to salt it? But, Ciá, did you ever see any man so stupid as this fellow? To let such a chance slip!”

La Bravetta, quite dumfounded, stared first at one and then at the other with his calf-like eyes.

“Donna Pelagge has always kept you under her thumb,” continued Ristabilito. “This time she can’t see you; why shouldn’t you sell the pig, and then we’ll feast on the money.”

“But Pelagge?” stammered La Bravetta, who was filled with an immense consternation by the image of his wrathful wife presented to his mind’s eye.

“Tell her that the pig was stolen,” said Ciávola, with a gesture of impatience.

La Bravetta shuddered.

“How am I to go home and tell her that? Pelagge won’t believe me—she’ll drive me—she’ll . . . You don’t know what Pelagge is!”





"Uh! Pelagge! uh! uh! Donna Pelagge!" jeered the two arch-plotters in chorus. And then Ristabilito, imitating Peppe's whining voice, and his wife's sharp and strident one, acted a comic scene in which Peppe was utterly routed, scolded, and finally cuffed like a naughty boy.

Ciávola walked round the pig, scarcely able to move for laughing. The unfortunate butt, seized with a violent fit of sneezing, waved his arms helplessly, trying to interrupt the dramatic representation. All the window-panes trembled with the noise. The flaming sunset streamed in on three very different human faces.

When Ristabilito stopped, Ciávola said—

"Well, let's go away!"

"If you'll stay to have supper——" began Mastro Peppe, somewhat constrainedly.

"No, no, my dear boy," interrupted Ciávola, as he turned towards the door, "you do as Pelagge tells you, and salt the pig."

As the two friends walked along the road Ristabilito said to Ciávola—

"*Compare*, shall we steal that pig to-night?"

"How?" said Ciávola.

"I know how, if they leave it where it was when we saw it."

"Well, let's do it. But, then?" said Ciávola.

The other's whole face lit up, and fairly vibrated with a grin of delight.

"Never mind—I know," was all he said.

They saw Don Bergamino Camplone coming along in the moonlight—a black figure between the rows of leafless poplars with their silvery trunks. They immediately quickened their pace to meet him; and the jolly priest, seeing their festive looks, asked with a smile—

"What's up now?"

The friends briefly communicated their project to Don

Bergamino, who assented with much cheerfulness. And Ristabilito added, in a low voice—

“Here we shall have to manage things cunningly. You know that Peppe, ever since he took up with that ugly old hag of a Donna Pelagge, has been getting very stingy, and at the same time he's very fond of wine. Now we must go and fetch him and take him to Assaù's tavern. You, Don Bergamino, must treat us all round. Peppe will drink as much as ever he can, seeing it costs him nothing, and will get as drunk as a pig; and then——”

The others agreed, and they went to Peppe's house, which was about two rifle-shots distant. When they were near enough Ciávola lifted up his voice—

“Ohé! La Bravetta-a-a! Are you coming to Assaù's? The priest is here, and he's going to pay for a bottle of wine for us. Ohé-é-é!”

La Bravetta was not long in descending, and all four set off in a row, joking and laughing in the moonlight. In the stillness the caterwauling of a distant cat was heard at intervals, and Ristabilito remarked—

• “Oh! Pé! don't you hear Pelagge calling you to come back?”

They crossed the ferry, reached the tavern, and sat till late over Assaù's wine, which Mastro Peppe found so good that he was at last discovered to be incapable of walking home. They assisted him back to the house and left him to go upstairs alone, which he did with some difficulty, talking disconnectedly all the time about Lepruccio the butcher and the quantity of salt needed for the pig, and quite oblivious of the fact that he had left the door unfastened. They waited a while, and then, entering softly, found the pig on the table, and carried it off between them, shaking with suppressed laughter. It was very heavy, and they were quite out of breath when they reached the priest's house.

In the morning, Mastro Peppe having slept off his wine, awoke, and lay still a little while on his bed, stretching his limbs and listening to the bells as they rang for the Eve of St. Anthony. Even in the confusion of his first awakening he felt a contented sense of possession steal through his mind, and tasted by anticipation the delight of seeing Lepruccio cutting up and covering with salt the plump joints of pork.

Under the impulse of this idea, he rose, and hurried out,



rubbing his eyes the while to get a better view. Nothing was to be seen on the table but a stain of blood, with the morning sun shining on it.

"The pig! Where is the pig?" cried the bereaved one hoarsely.

A furious excitement seized upon him. He rushed downstairs, saw the open door, struck his forehead with his fists, and burst into the open air yelling aloud—calling all his farm labourers round him, and asking them if they had seen the pig—if they had taken it. He multiplied his complaints, raising his voice more and more; and at last the doleful sound, echoing along the river-bank, reached the ears of Ciávola and Il Ristabilito.

They therefore repaired to the spot at their ease, fully

agreed to enjoy the sight and keep up the joke. When they came in sight, Mastro Peppe turned to them, all afflicted and in tears, and exclaimed, "Oh! poor me! They have stolen the pig! Oh! poor me! What shall I do?—what shall I do?"

Biagio Quaglia stood for a while, looking at this most unhappy man out of his half-shut eyes, with an expression midway between derision and admiration, and his head inclined to one shoulder, as if critically judging of some dramatic effort. Then he came closer and said—

"Ah! yes, yes—one can't deny it. . . . You play your part well."

Peppe, not understanding, lifted his face all furrowed with the tracks of tears. . . .

"To tell the truth, I never thought you would have been so cute," Ristabilito went on. "Well done! Bravo! I'm delighted!"

"What's that you're saying?" asked La Bravetta between his sobs. "What's that you're saying? Oh! poor me! How can I ever go home again?"

"Bravo! bravo! that's right!" insisted Ristabilito. "Go on! Yell harder!—cry!—tear your hair! Make them hear! That's it! Make them believe it!"

And Peppe, still weeping—

"But I say they have really and truly stolen it! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"That's it! Go on! Don't stop! Again!"

Peppe, quite beside himself with exasperation and grief, redoubled his asseverations.

"I'm telling the truth! May I die now, at once, if they haven't stolen that pig from me!"

"Oh, poor innocent!" jeered Ciávola. "Put your finger in your eye! How can we believe you, when we saw the pig here yesterday evening? Has St. Anthony given him wings to fly away with?"

“ Oh, blessed St. Anthony! It is just as I say!”

“ It’s not so!”

“ It is.”

“ No!”

“ Oh! oh! oh! It is! it is! I’m a dead man! I don’t know how in the world I am to go home. Pelagge won’t believe me, and if she does, I shall never hear the end of it. . . . Oh! I’m dead! . . .”

At last they pretended to be convinced, and proposed a remedy for the misfortune.

“ Listen here,” said Biagio Quaglia; “ it must have been one of the people hereabouts; for it is certain that no one would have come from India to steal your pig, would they, Pé?”

“ Of course, of course,” assented Peppe.

“ Well then—attend to me now,” continued Ristabilito, delighted at the devout attention accorded to his words; “ if no one came from India to rob you, it is certain that one of the people hereabouts must have been the thief; don’t you think so?”

“ Yes, yes.”

“ Well, what have we to do? We must get all these labourers together, and try some charm to discover the thief. And if we find the thief, we’ve found the pig.”

Mastro Peppe’s eyes brightened with eagerness, and he came closer, for the hint at a charm had awakened all his innate superstition.

“ Now, you know, there are three kinds of magic—the black, the red, and the white. And you know there are three women in the village skilled in the art: Rosa Schiavona, Rosaria Pajara, and Ciniscia. You have only to choose.”

Peppe remained a moment in doubt. Then he decided for Rosaria Pajara, who enjoyed great fame as a sorceress, and had in past times performed several marvellous feats.

“ Very well,” concluded Ristabilito; “ there is no time to

be lost. Now, just for your sake, and only to do you a pleasure, I am going to the town to get everything that will be wanted. I will talk to Rosaria, get her to give me everything, and come back before noon. Give me the money."

Peppe took three *carlini* from his waistcoat pocket, and held them out hesitatingly.

"Three *carlini*?" shouted the other, putting back his hand. "Three *carlini*! She'll want ten at least!"

On hearing this Pelagge's husband was almost struck dumb.

"What? Ten *carlini* for a charm?" he stammered, feeling with trembling fingers in his pocket. "Here are eight for you. I have no more."

"Well, well," said Quaglia dryly; "we'll see what we can do. Are you coming along, Ciá?"

The two companions set off at a smart pace for Pescara, along the poplar-bordered path, in Indian file, Ciávola demonstrating his delight by mighty thumps on Ristabilito's back. When they reached the town, they entered the shop of a certain Don Daniele Pacentro, a chemist of their acquaintance. Here they purchased certain drugs and spices, and got him to make them up into little balls the size of walnuts, which were then well coated with sugar and baked. Biagio Quaglia (who had disappeared in the meantime) then returned with a paper full of dirt swept up in the road, of which he insisted on having two pills made, in appearance exactly similar to the others, but mixed with bitter aloes, and only very slightly coated with sugar. The chemist did as he was desired, putting a mark on the two bitter pills, at Ristabilito's suggestion.

The two jokers now returned to Peppe's farm, and reached it about noon. La Bravetta was awaiting them with great anxiety, and as soon as he saw them shouted, "Well?"

"Everything is in order!" replied Ristabilito triumphantly, showing the little box of magic confectionery. "Now,

seeing to-day is the Eve of St. Anthony, and the peasants are taking a holiday, you must call them all together, out here in the open air, and give them a drink. You have some casks of Montepulciano; you might as well have some of that out for once. And when they are all assembled it will be my business to do and say all that has to be said and done."

Two hours later, the afternoon being very warm, bright, and clear, and La Bravetta having spread the report, all the farmers of the neighbourhood and their labourers came in response to the invitation. A great flock of geese went waddling about among the heaps of straw in the yard; the smell of the stable came in puffs on the air. They stood there, quietly laughing and joking with one another, as they waited for the wine,—these rustics, with their bow-legs, bent by heavy labour,—some of them with faces wrinkled and ruddy as old apples, and eyes that had been made gentle by long patience, or quick with years of cunning; others young and limber, with beards just coming, and home care evidenced in their patched and mended clothes.

Ciávola and Ristabilito did not keep them waiting long. The latter, holding the box in his hand, directed them to make a circle round him, and then, standing in the middle, addressed them in a short oration, not without a certain gravity of voice and gesture.

"Neighbours," he began, "none of you, I am sure, knows the real reason why Mastro Peppe de' Sieri has summoned you here. . . ."

A movement of astonishment at this strange preamble passed round the circle, and the joy at the promised wine gave place to uneasy expectations of various kinds. The orator continued—

"But, as something disagreeable might happen, and you might afterwards complain of me, I will tell you what it is all about before we make the experiment."

The listeners looked into one another's eyes with a

bewildered air, and then cast curious and uncertain glances at the little box which the orator held in his hand. One of them, as Ristabilito paused to consider the effect of his words, exclaimed impatiently—

“Well?”

“Presently, presently, neighbours. Last night there was stolen from Mastro Peppe a fine pig which was going to be salted down. No one knows who the thief is; but it is quite certain that he will be found among you, because no one would come from India to steal Mastro Peppe's pig.”

Whether it was a happy effect of the strange argument



from  
India,  
or the  
action of the  
mild winter sun,  
La Bravetta began  
to sneeze. The rustics

took a step backward, the whole flock of geese scattered in terror, and seven consecutive sneezes resounded freely in the air, disturbing the rural stillness of the spot. The noise restored some cheerfulness to the minds of the assembly, who in a little while regained their composure, and Ristabilito continued as gravely as ever—

“To find out the thief Mastro Peppe intends to give you to eat of certain good *confetti*, and to drink of a certain old Montepulciano, which he has tapped to-day on purpose.



But I must tell you one thing first. The thief, as soon as he puts the sweets into his mouth, will find them bitter—so bitter that he will be forced to spit them out. Now, are you willing to try? Or perhaps the thief, rather than be found out in this way, would like to go and confess himself to the priest? Answer, neighbours.”

“We are willing to eat and drink,” replied the assembly, almost with one voice. And a wave of suppressed emotion passed through all these guileless folk. Each one looked at his neighbour with a point of interrogation in his eyes; and each one naturally tried to put a certain ostentatious spontaneity into his laughter.

Said Ciávola: “You must all stand in a row, so that no one can hide himself.”

When they were all ready he took the bottle and glasses, preparing to pour out the wine. Ristabilito went to one end of the row, and began quietly to distribute the *confetti*, which crunched and disappeared in a moment under the splendid teeth of the rustics. When he reached Mastro Peppe he handed him one of the pills prepared with aloes, and passed on without giving any sign.

Mastro Peppe, who till then had been standing staring with his eyes wide open, intent on surprising the culprit, put the pill into his mouth almost with gluttonous eagerness and began to chew. Suddenly his cheeks rose with a sudden movement towards his eyes, the corners of his mouth and his temples were filled with wrinkles, the skin of his nose was drawn up into folds, his lower jaw was twisted awry; all his features formed a pantomimic expression of horror, and a sort of visible shudder ran down the back of his neck and over his shoulders. Then, suddenly, since the tongue could not endure the bitterness of the aloes, and a lump rising in his throat made it simply impossible for him to swallow, the miserable man was forced to spit.

“Ohé, Mastro Pé, what are you doing?” exclaimed the

sharp, harsh voice of Tulespre dei Passeri, an old goatherd, greenish and shaggy as a swamp tortoise.

Hearing this, Ristabilito, who had not yet finished distributing the pills, turned suddenly round. Seeing that La Bravetta was contorting his features and limbs in agony, he said, with an air of the greatest benevolence—

“Well, perhaps that one was too much done! Here is another! swallow it, Peppe!”

And with his finger and thumb he crammed the second aloe-pill into Peppe's mouth.

The poor man took it, and, feeling the goatherd's sharp, malignant eyes fixed on him, made a supreme effort to overcome his disgust; he neither chewed nor swallowed the pill, but kept his tongue motionless against his teeth. But when the aloes began to dissolve, he could bear it no longer; his lips began to writhe as before, his eyes filled with tears, which soon overflowed and ran down his cheeks. At last he had to spit the thing out.

“Ohé, Mastro Pé, and what are you doing *now*?” cried the goatherd again, with a grin which showed his toothless, whitish gums. “Oh! and indeed, now, what does this mean?”

All the peasants broke from their ranks and surrounded La Bravetta, some with laughing derision, others with angry words. The sudden and brutal revulsions of pride to which the sense of honour of the rustic population is subject—the implacable rigidity of superstition—now suddenly exploded in a tempest of abuse.

“What did you make us come here for? To try and lay the blame on us with a false charm? To cheat us? What for? Thief! liar! son of a dog! etc., etc. Would you cheat us? You scoundrel! you thief, you! We are going to break all your pots and dishes! Thief! son of a dog!” etc., etc., *da capo*.

Having smashed the bottle and glasses, they went their

ways, shouting back their concluding imprecations from among the poplars.

There remained on the threshing-floor Ciávola, Ristabilito, the geese, and La Bravetta. The latter, filled with shame, rage, and confusion, and with his mouth still sore from the bitterness of the aloes, could not utter a word. Ristabilito, with a refinement of cruelty, stood looking at him, shaking his head ironically, and tapping the ground with his foot. Ciávola crowed, with an indescribable mockery in his voice—

“Ah! ah! ah! ah! Bravo, La Bravetta! Now do tell us—how much did you make by it? Ten ducats?”

*Gabriele d'Annunzio.*

### *A DAY IN THE COUNTRY.*

“IT is no use talking, my dear fellow!—there are times when it is simply impossible to say no. They urge you—they worry you—they lay you under obligation by so many kind attentions, that a refusal would be an actual breach of good manners towards people whose only thought is to do you a kindness.”

You allege business. “Oh!” they reply, “the world will not come to an end for one day’s absence.” It is too hot? “Come in the morning, when it is cool.” The village is such a long way from the station? “We will send the gig for you.” You have engaged to pass the day with a friend? “Bring him along with you. . . .” In short, I said yes,—and so on Sunday morning I went and did the deed.

When I had reached the village, and found myself in the midst of a crowd of peasants coming out from early mass, who looked at me as if I had been a wild beast, I asked for Signor Cosimo’s house. Eight or ten people immediately offered to accompany me thither.

“There it is—up there; do you see that house with a

little tower on the top?—that's it. Do you know Sor Cosimo? Ah! he's a good gentleman! And his brother the priest? And his wife, Sora Flavia? She's a kind lady, so she is, and gives away ever so much money. And Sora Olimpia, too, Signor Cosimo's sister. . . . She's one who has her own ideas . . . as who should say that she has such a passion for books that she always has one in her hands, and has nearly lost her head over them; but afterwards, do you see? she repeats them all by heart, in a way that no one could believe it! And she is a good creature too; and, as for her family, when there is anything to be put on paper, I don't see how they could ever do without her. . . . There used to be Bistino, Sor Cosimo's eldest son, but now he is in the seminary at Volterra, and they say that he does them so much credit there that they won't even let him come home for the holidays. There's a boy for you! When he was at home, and used to help his uncle the chaplain at his net,<sup>1</sup> the two between them caught more birds in a day than all the other nets in a week. . . . Look, sir, you turn this way and go up hill, and you can't miss it!"

• All this varied information about my hosts, with whom I was already slightly acquainted, was given me on the way by the peasants, who, each in turn, vied with the rest in bestowing it on me, till, having escorted me to the end of a short avenue leading to the villa, they quitted me with respectful salutations, after asking me whether I required any servants.

Scarcely had I rung the bell when the door was opened by a youth in his shirt sleeves, and a white apron tucked into the waistband of his trousers.

"Is Signor Cosimo in?"

"Oh! yes, sir! Come in, come in! You are that gentleman from Florence who sent yesterday to say that perhaps he would come to-day—eh?"

<sup>1</sup> See Note 4 at end.

“Yes.”

“Come, then, come along! The master said I was to show you into the best room, and he will come presently. That’s right, sir! You’ve done well to come. Such a long time as they’ve been talking about you, and expecting you! Are they all well at Florence? See; come in here and sit down. Will you excuse me, sir?”

“Go on, go on, my good fellow.”

I went and sat down by the window, and began to turn over an old photograph album. In the meantime I perceived that my arrival might truly be said to have created a sensation, since I could hear on the first floor a great banging of doors and a going and coming of shod and unshod feet, which caused a thick shower of whitewash to descend from the ceiling, and the window-panes and the glass shade covering a wax figure on the sideboard to vibrate as with an earthquake.

After a few minutes I heard a scratching at the door, then a kick against it; it opened, and I saw a child of about six years, with a half-eaten apple in his hand. He looked at me with an air of displeasure, and asked—

“I say, is that your book? You’ve got to put it down at once—if you don’t, I’ll tell my uncle the priest.”

I laid aside the album, but he continued to look daggers at me.

“Are you that stranger that was to come to-day?”

“Yes, little one.” Affecting a caressing gentleness, in order to conciliate him, I held out my hand. The small boy retreated two paces, and showed symptoms of being about to throw the apple at my head.

“Will you keep your hands to yourself? What did you come up here for?”

I was beginning to feel annoyed, and did not answer.

“Yes, yes—father told you to come—I know that well enough; but mother didn’t want you, because she had to

have all those fowls killed. Gostino is plucking them just now. But you're going away this evening? . . . Won't you answer? But I hope you are,—because, when mother saw you coming along the road, she wished you all sorts of bad luck." . . .

The door opened, and there appeared, shod in slippers, the magnificent bulk of Signor Cosimo, who, smiling cordially, clapped his great hands on my shoulders, saying, three times over, "Bravo, bravo, bravo!" Then, turning to the small boy, he demanded—

"What are you doing here?"

"Just what I think fit!" replied the infant, who was thereupon expelled from the room with a tremendous box on the ear, after which his father turned to me and invited me to be seated.

My eye was at once caught by the grease-spots, and stains of wine and coffee, which adorned Signor Cosimo's shirt and trousers. To tell the truth, I was uncomfortably affected by the sense of a want of consideration towards myself, but was soon ~~appeased~~ by his apologies for having kept me waiting, because he had gone upstairs to his own room, to "clean himself up a bit."

"Oh! but . . . Don't mention it, Signor Cosimo!"

"Oh! bravo! bravo! bravo! But what a season, eh? Look here, you must be in need of some refreshment. . . . Gostino-o-o-o! What are they saying? What do they say in Florence about the crops? . . . Bravo! bravo! It is very good of you to have come; you have given us a regular treat!"

"Did you call, sir?"

"Go upstairs, Gostino, and ask your mistress to give you the keys of the sideboard, and bring this gentleman some refreshments." Then to the child, who had returned in the wake of the servitor, "Go at once and get your face washed and make yourself fit to be seen." With that, he boxed the

small boy's ears a second time, and turned him out of the room.

"And as to fruit, my dear sir, there's nothing at all this year."

"Ah!"

"Well, what is one to say? For the last three years it's clear there has been witchcraft in it. Just imagine it. I used to put aside four hundred pounds in a year, and now . . . sometimes fifty, sometimes sixty. . . . And then, what stuff it is! Every bit worm-eaten! I beg your pardon, but will you come down into the granary with me? But, no—I hear my brother coming down; we'll wait for him."

"Let us wait for him, by all means."

"He's a queer sort of customer, you know—a confirmed grumbler!—but, after all, a good sort at bottom. The other day, for instance, do you see—— he suffers so much from——"

These preliminaries to the introduction were interrupted by the appearance of Don Paolo himself, who entered the room with a profound bow. I rose, and was going to meet him, but he protested.

"No, no, I won't have it—don't disturb yourself, sir. If you will excuse me, I will keep my hat on, as that is my custom. Sit down, sit down, pray."

There was a moment of silence, and then Sor Cosimo resumed the conversation.

"You see, Paolo, this is the gentleman whom we were speaking of——"

"I know! I know! Bless you! can't you make an end of it? How many times do you find it necessary to repeat a thing?"

"No—I wanted to tell you——"

"Have you sent for refreshments?"

"I told Gostino. He is just coming."

"And so you're from Florence, eh?" asked the chaplain, turning to me.

"At your service."

"A wretched year, my dear sir! If it does not rain soon we shall never get any crops to speak of. . . . A year ago this very day I had taken fifty-six birds by ten o'clock; and this morning, before I came away to mass at eight, we had caught three miserable little things, and an accursed hawk that has half bitten my hand to pieces—look! Are they taking any at Florence?"

"To tell the truth, I have never asked."

"Is the Prior of San Gaggio catching any this year?—is he catching any?"

"To my knowledge . . . I could not say at all."

"Ah! because last Friday he sent to tell me that he had not even had the decoy-cages made. He says that Father Lorenzo della Santissima Annunziata is not well. Is that true?"

"To tell the truth . . . I do not know."

"What!—do you know nothing, then?"

• "I will tell you. . . . Let us rather speak of yourself. Signor Cosimo was telling me just now——"

"I must run out for a moment to the net. I say, Cosimo, what time is dinner?"

"Tell the women to get it at any hour that suits you."

"Ah! here's one of them," said Don Paolo, who was just in the doorway. "What o'clock do we dine, Flavia?—at twelve?"

Signora Flavia, the wife of my host, bowed her head in assent as she entered the room, while the chaplain, an unsaluted guest, went off to his nets. She came to meet me, asked me how I was, said that she was pleased to hear it before I had time to answer "Well," and planted herself in a chair to look at me. Sor Cosimo, upon whom all the conversation seemed to devolve, remarked—



"See, Flavia, this is the gentleman who, as I was telling you the other evening——" Whereupon Sora Flavia began again, *da capo*.

"How are you?—Well?"

"Yes, madam."

"And your wife?"

"Very well, thank you."

"Remember me to her." Then, looking at her husband as if to ask him whether she ought to say any more to me, she relapsed into silence, and fell to contemplating me again.

Fortunately Signor Cosimo relieved me from the embarrassment of choosing the subject of conversation by reverting to politics. The Tunis Question being then at its height, he naturally fell upon it tooth and nail, grew heated and excited, and blurted out, puffing and blowing, all his ideas touching foreign politics, concluding with the statement that if he and his brother the priest had been in the Cabinet, there would not be a Frenchman in Tunis. . . . At this point Signora Flavia interrupted him by asking me if there was any cotton in the material of my coat. I choked down a burst of laughter, and hazarded the answer that there was not.

"Then it is very dear, is it not?"

"Yes; I think it was seven francs a mètre."

"Ah! they measure by mètres, do they? It must be good stuff, though. Just look, Cosimo; you ought to have one made like it——"

"Yes, yes; just like you—always interrupting! We'll speak of that afterwards." . . . Then, turning to me again—

"Because, if France——" He was just about to recommence the attack on Tunis when the door opened to admit his sister Olimpia, a maiden lady of fifty or so, the same whose literary reputation had made so great an impression on the peasants.

She had on a faded light-blue dress, wore a crinoline, and carried a puce-coloured mantilla over her arm. On her head she had a broad-brimmed straw hat of a dingy yellow, adorned with a wreath of real ivy, and two small locks of well-greased hair fell in soft folds on the slightly roughened skin of her cheeks. In one hand she carried her parasol and a bunch of lavender; in the other a book, in which she kept her finger to mark the place. She advanced with ostentatious ease of manner, and bowed, half-shutting her eyes.

"Sir," she said, "you are welcome to this modest habitation."

"A delicious habitation, Signorina, where I should be very sorry to be troublesome." She again half-shut her eyes, and smiled on me. Retiring backwards, as gracefully as she could, she went and sat down with her back to the window. She was evidently well acquainted with the clumsy artifices of a very mature young lady.

I was contemplating her with the utmost attention, when I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder, and Sor Cosimo said to me—

"You ought to hear what poetry this girl writes! Have you got it here, Olimpia—that sonnet you made last Sunday?"

"That ode, you mean—come!"

"Well, well—sonnet or ode—it's the same thing. But if you could hear it—with rhymes, and all! I tell you! Come, let us hear it!"

"Afterwards, Cosimo, afterwards!"

Heaven preserve me! Turning to Signorina Olimpia, who still kept her finger in her book, I asked—

"What are you reading, may I ask?"

"I am just glancing over Leopardi."

"Ah! ah!" And Sor Cosimo broke in—

"Fine! fine!—ah! very fine!"

“Are you acquainted with his works, Sor Cosimo?”

“Oh! most certainly! She read it to us last Sunday at dessert, and made us all cry like babies.”

“No, Cosimo, you do not understand. The gentleman means this book that I have here.”

“Ah! what! Well, well! . . . I was speaking of the sonnet. But you shall hear it afterwards. . . And you must repeat that one too that you wrote when Calamai's son was made a priest. Oh! *that!* And then . . . But don't imagine, sir, that she has only one. She has a whole drawer full, and you may say that, if one is fine, others are not so bad. . . Well, you shall hear.”

I was eager to hear her opinion of Leopardi, and asked—

“What do you think of this book, Signorina?”

“I will tell you,” she replied. “To say the truth, I have scarcely got at the bottom of it as yet, . . . but, if I must speak sincerely, it seems to me there is not much interest in it.”

“Ah!”

“Don't you think so too?”

“Well—yes—in a manner of speaking, yes!”

“If you will allow me to say so, no story is ever finished properly. You find Consalvo—that, now, is stolen from Tasso, the scene of Clorinda and Tancred. . . Well, you find Consalvo. What then? Consalvo dies, and, at least as far as I have got, one hears no more of her. . And the same thing with the characters. There is that one of that Nerina; it would be fine enough, but, good heavens! it is so little developed . . . and one does not know what to make of it . . . ! Do you agree with me?”

“Well . . . to tell the truth . . .”

“You see, Cosimo, whether or not I was right when we were discussing the subject the other evening with Signora Amalia.”

“I should think so, indeed!” exclaimed Sor Cosimo,

testifying his approval by a great guffaw of laughter. "Do you mean to say you would compare yourself with that conceited creature? Let her go for seven years to school with the Sisters of St. Francis de Sales, as you have been, and then come and talk to us. . . ."

The amazing literary criticisms of Sor Cosimo and his sister completely took away my breath. I was relieved from the necessity of answering by the appearance of Gostino with a bottle and a tray of glasses.

"I am sure you'll like this wine, sir; you'll see!" said Gostino as he poured me out some wine.

"Come, come, Gostino!" said Signorina Olimpia.

"Look sharp, Gostino," continued Sor Cosimo; "go and fetch two more bottles—one of '62 (you'll find it on the table at the end of the cellar), and the other of '59 (the year of the Revolution), and you shall see"—he turned to me again—"you shall see you have never tasted any like this!"

"But . . . that's enough, Signor Cosimo!"

"Come, come; no compliments. While it's coming you'll take another drop of this, won't you?"

"Thanks, but I could not. . . . I am not accustomed. . . ."

"Sir—I'm going to have another glass too—as the friar took a wife, for company's sake. . . . Shall I pour you some out? You can throw it away afterwards, if you like—but I must pour it out."

"Very well, then; since you wish it so, another sip. . . . Enough,—that's enough!"

"No, sir—the glass full, or none!"

Gostino returned with the other bottles, and then they all fell upon me, beginning with Signora Flavia, and not excluding Gostino, beseeching me to try those also. Signor Cosimo nudged my elbow, Gostino poured out the wine,

and the two ladies entreated me with eloquent glances not to do them the wrong of refusing this attention.

I resisted for a little, but had to give way at last; and then my evil genius inspired me with the notion of praising the quality of the wine, and remarking that not only must the grapes have been exquisite, but the casks and cellars first-rate also. I regretted the words the moment they were out of my mouth.

“I’m going to show you them,” said Sor Cosimo immediately.

He took my arm, and, leaving the ladies in the dining-room, dragged me off to the cellar, with Gostino to light the way—now warning me of a step, and again requesting me to stoop where the ceiling was low, and at last showing himself more astonished than I could possibly be at the beauty of a cobwebbed vault, with a few casks along one wall, and two smaller barrels in a corner.

As it was necessary for me to be astonished, and to admire something, I began to praise the solid construction of the house, which I inferred from an inspection of the basement walls.

“Well, you shall see it now!”

From the cellar we ascended to the ground floor, which I had to review in detail—dining-room, ironing-room, kitchen, oven, larder, cupboards. . . . Then the new staircase—the first one was where the store-room is now. . . . Then the study, which his brother the priest had wished to have on the site of the stable they had had pulled down, but that was too damp. . . . Then up to the first floor—drawing-room, sitting-rooms, bed-rooms, and everything,—in fact, before I knew what I was about, I beheld Sora Olimpia trying on her puce-coloured mantle before the looking-glass. . . . “Look out of the window—now isn’t that a view? There’s the kitchen-garden. We’ll go there afterwards, but first you must see the second floor.”

We went up to the second floor, where he led me round for some twenty minutes, explaining in detail the destination of every apartment, together with the most noteworthy events which had taken place in the same—from the large room where the silkworms lived to the dark den where the chaplain kept the bullfinches he was teaching to pipe. . . .

At the foot of the stairs we met Don Paolo returning from his quail nets, puffing and blowing, and grumbling at the Provost's hurry to get to church. "Was he afraid of not finishing mass in time to get back to dinner, the great glutton? Do, for any sake, go on, Cosimo; do me the kindness—bad luck to this sort of work!—and tell them to be getting ready in the meantime, and I'll come in ten minutes—if they don't like that, they may sing mass by themselves. . . ."

"Do you see?" whispered Sor Cosimo to me, "that's his way. If he doesn't catch any birds he becomes a regular beast. Come, let us go on; the ladies will follow by themselves."

"They have already started, sir," said Gostino.

"All the better; come along."

• I should have been thankful to sit down and rest for a minute, but had to follow Sor Cosimo, who, in order to get away from his brother, set off at such a pace that it was difficult to keep up with him.

Mountains stand firm, and men move on. When Sor Cosimo, hurrying into the door of the canon's house, left me under the church-porch, my eye fell on a well-dressed man whose face somehow seemed familiar. As we passed each other, in walking up and down, I saw that his eyes were fixed on me, and that he was smiling, as if about to address me. I was just about to speak to him, as we met for the third time, when he uttered my name, and I suddenly recalled his.

"After nineteen years! How in the world did you get here?"

"I'm the parish doctor. And you?"

"I only came out for the day."

"You'll come and dine with me?"

"I am engaged."

"To whom?"

"We'll speak of that afterwards. Now tell me about yourself. . . . How are you getting on?"

"As well as a country doctor ever does."

"And with the peasants."

"Badly."

"Why?"

"Because, being a gentleman, I am not a beast like themselves."

"I understand. And how about the local authorities?"

"No better. I am not on good terms with the Syndic; and, by-the-bye, I must be off before he comes."

"The reason?"

"I was imprudent enough to contradict him in public—in the chemist's shop, when, speaking of books on etiquette, he mentioned Monsignor della Casa and *Flavio Gioja*!"<sup>1</sup>

"Who is this portent of erudition?"

"The wealthiest, the most cultured, the most respectable person in the commune—a certain Signor Cosimo."

"My host!"

"Are you staying at his house?"

"I am!"

"How in the world—— But never mind now,—after dinner you must come to me and tell me about everything, and we shall be together till you leave. I have a great deal to talk to you about—I'll drive you down to the station. . . . Now let us go in."

<sup>1</sup> The confusion is between Flavio Gioja, inventor of the mariner's compass (c. 1300), and Melchiorre Gioja (1767-1829), author of a well-known manual of good breeding.

"Here you see my masters," he said, with a smile, as we came to a halt in a corner at the upper end of the church.

"They are all up there. Do you know any of them?"

"Only Signor Cosimo's family."

"I'll tell you the names of some—they are quite worth your attention. They wouldn't be bad sort of people if it were not for the intolerable airs they give themselves on the strength of their ignorance. All well known, though!—all honest folks,—and all of them very much admired, because the rest of the parish are greater asses than they. Do you see the priest who is celebrating? That is the Provost of Siepole. A profound theologian—a thriving dealer in oil—confessor to the nunnery—a great eater. . . . He doesn't like me, but he puts up with me ever since I cured him of an indigestion which he brought on by eating salted cheese and beans."

"He's not young," I observed.

"Over sixty. The one at his right is his chaplain, who is at daggers drawn with me, and gives it out all over the country that I am a lunatic, because I once refused to make him out a false certificate of illness. I think there is not much love lost between the two, for family reasons. . . . And yet they are never apart; the chaplain's chief occupation is to water down his superior's oaths. Every time the Provost takes a trick at cards he says '*Giuraddio*,' and the chaplain qualifies it with '*Bacco*.' So they go on, for the sake of saving appearances and their souls; but sometimes the Provost feels it as an insult to his dignity, and takes it ill, and then he snubs the chaplain, and in his wrath the oaths come dropping out like the beads off a broken rosary, while the chaplain goes on counteracting them with his '*Bacco! bacco!*' quite unmoved, and ready to face martyrdom rather than yield. He is the best shot about here, and could beat the whole village at *briscola*. The poor people adore him, because he says mass in ten minutes, is easy at confession,



and has no scruples about thrashing any man that tries to play tricks on him.

“The little thin man on this side is an unattached priest—a good fellow—miserably poor, and in wretched health. He contrives to worry along somehow and support an elder sister and two grand-children of hers, whom he teaches himself. He is master, father, and uncle to them, all in one; and ekes out his means by the help of four or five other pupils, whom he picks up wherever he can at a franc a month. No one knows how he does it, but he pays his way, and keeps an honoured name as a good citizen and blameless priest; and, above all, he is such a *rara avis* as not to call down the curse of heaven on his country.<sup>1</sup> . . . In the village, as you may easily understand, people either don’t trouble their heads about him, or else they despise him.

“That other is Sor Cosimo’s brother, whom you know. . . I’ll tell you something about him too; but hush! . . . every one is kneeling down. . . .”

The silence was followed by the usual shuffling of feet, tinkling of medals, and indispensable volley of previously suppressed coughs. The air was becoming more and more unendurably close. The doctor recommenced his remarks in an undertone.

“And Sor Cosimo’s brother . . . he is nicknamed ‘Thickskull’, and yet . . .” Here he leaned over and whispered in my ear. . . .

“Never!” I exclaimed in astonishment. “Every day?”

“On my word of honour!”

Here Sor Cosimo smiled at me from the other side of the church, and waved his hand at the organ, as if to say, “What an instrument we have, and what an organist! You hear—eh?”

<sup>1</sup> Since 1870, of course, Italian priests have, as a rule, been hostile to the Government.

“That man beside Sor Cosimo, with the great black silk scarf round his neck,” my friend went on, “is Stelloni the miller, a member of the School Board. Sor Cosimo nominated him, because—considering the antipathy which Stelloni has shown towards all schools from his childhood up—he was able to assure the Council that he would never be one to advocate *unnecessary* expense! In fact, Stelloni, true to his principles, has never set foot inside a school-house. He says it is from a desire not to compromise himself, knowing, as he does, that things are not managed in the way he would approve of; low and unmannerly people say it is because he is afraid of having to question the children. He’s a good-natured sort of fellow, though, and hates no one in the world except the schoolmaster—that pale young man standing over there by the pillar,—because he once corrected a grammatical mistake in a composition by the miller’s son. Stelloni felt a kindly compassion for the master as long as the point remained doubtful; but when it was established beyond question that the master was right, his compassion turned to implacable hatred, and now he would be glad of any excuse for turning him out into the road to starve.

“That little thin old man, at the end of the row on the right, is one of the richest landowners in the place; a retired lawyer, and Sor Cosimo’s predecessor as Syndic. His ruling passion is that of running his head against stone walls, and systematically contradicting, at every meeting of the Council, everything that Sor Cosimo proposes. He has immortalised himself by means of two inscriptions which he had put up—with his own name in capital letters—during his term of office: one on the public well, when he had the pump put up,—the other you see opposite you—when he had the ciborium in the Chapel of the Seven Sorrows re-gilt at his own expense. He got himself elected Syndic in order to get the new government road run past the gates of his villa.

Afterwards, when he found this impossible, and also failed to get the title of 'Cavaliere,' he retired in a rage. Now he relieves his feelings by taking the opposition side in the Council;—he turns off one tenant every year, and imprecates the wrath of Providence on the Government at every possible opportunity—even when the frost ruined his early tomatoes."

"And you are in the hands of these people?" I remarked.

"I am in the hands of these people."

. . . At the moment of going to table, Sor Cosimo said to me, with a wink, "We must keep up our spirits to-day—bravo! bravo!" Signora Flavia repeated, for the sixth time, her fear that I should find it penitential fare at best, seeing that they had made no alteration in their usual Sunday's dinner.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, ostensibly because I was hurt by these apologies, but in reality because I felt I could not stand much more. Signorina Olimpia preceded us, curtsying backwards, after having presented me with a roguish glance and a little bunch of jessamine; and we entered the dining-room, prepared for a great occasion, as was evident from the odorous presence of table-linen fresh from the quinces and lavender of the store-closet.

"Here we are," Sor Cosimo began again. "We have no ceremony here—a little soup, a bit of boiled meat, a sweet thing or two, and that's all!" He crossed himself and said grace.

The small boy whose acquaintance I had made in the morning, had, on entering the room, remained open-mouthed for a time; but when he had taken in all the preparations, and more especially a side-table covered with pastry, sweets and bottles, he could control himself no longer, and turning to me, yelled, bringing down both his fists on the table—

“Oh! I say, this is jolly! Look what a lot of nice things there are to-day, because you’re here!”

Sor Cosimo aimed a kick at him under the table, which fortunately missed its mark; and immediately a frozen silence fell upon the guests.

The women sighed,—the men glared upon that boy with looks which ought to have reduced him to ashes on the spot,—and I turned to Signor Cosimo and asked him, with an air of innocent bewilderment, what his son had said. My stratagem was perfectly successful, and every one’s face had brightened up when Gostino appeared in his shirt sleeves, bringing in the soup. Signora Flavia called him to her, and whispered something in his ear. At the next course Gostino returned in his shooting-jacket, and with his hat on. Signora Flavia called him again; and when he next appeared, with the boiled meat, he had left his hat behind, and cast a questioning glance at his mistress, as much as to say, “Is it right now?” She nodded an affirmative, but Sor Cosimo signified to him, by another glance, that he ought to have known these things without being told. Gostino signified, in reply, by a shrug of his shoulders, that they had been bothering him unnecessarily, and requested me to take another piece of chicken.

This politeness on Gostino’s part was the signal for attack. The wine had begun to revive the spirits of the company, and had affected Sor Cosimo more than the rest. A tenant came in to say that at Don Paolo’s net in the garden they had taken seven bullfinches, by which means he too was cheered up; and now I found myself overwhelmed by the avalanche of attentions these good people bestowed on me. They heaped my plate with eatables, and pressed on me one dish after another, new ones appearing every time I imagined dinner was at an end. I must take some spinach, because it was a rarity at this time of year; I must taste that other dish, because Signorina Olimpia had made the sauce

herself. And all the time Gostino was behind my chair, reproaching me for eating nothing, and Signora Flavia was lamenting that the dinner was not to my taste. . . .

At last it was at an end. . . .

And the conversation during dinner? There was none! There was a continual, dull succession of "Take some——" —"Thank you" —"You're not eating" —"You're not drinking"—and of roars of laughter whenever they had hit upon a new device for cramming me to death.

"The poems, Olimpia, the poems!" yelled Signor Cosimo at last. "The sonnet for Calamai!"

I turned at once to Signorina Olimpia, to read in her eyes the gravity of the calamity which threatened me, and I saw there an expression which made me sorry for her. Signora Flavia had the same look, and even in the face of that irrepressible child I thought I read something like fear. They all gazed at Sor Cosimo in a piteously questioning manner, and then simultaneously turned towards the place at the end of the table, at his right.

At that point the master of the house called Gostino, in a tone of vexation, and the latter appeared, in company with two tenants, who, seizing Don Paolo under the arms, dragged him like a log out of the room. I jumped up to offer my assistance, but Sor Cosimo stopped me, telling me, with a look of mingled pain and humiliation, that I was not to be frightened—it was quite a customary thing.

"In an hour or two he'll be all right—heart complaint. The attacks come on when he has over-eaten himself a little. . . ."

"But why does he not try to moderate himself?"

Sor Cosimo shrugged his shoulders.

"Does it often happen?" I inquired.

"Every day, poor uncle!" replied Signorina Olimpia.

"Ah! it is indeed a great inconvenience!"

"And what does the doctor say?"

“Ah!” exclaimed Sor Cosimo. “Precisely!—you know him, that—that——” He had no epithet wherewith to qualify the doctor. “The doctor laughs. . . . I’ll tell you what he says—he laughs; and when I sent for him the second time, after one of these attacks, . . . and when it was I who had got him his appointment, you understand? I got it for him! Well, he had the audacity to say to that poor fellow, ‘Chaplain, if I were you, I’d put a little water in it next time!’ There, do you understand now ~~what~~ the doctor says? But he has never set foot in my house since, and I hope . . . Where are you going to give us coffee, Flavia, here, or in the garden?”

The matter being referred to me, I voted at once for the garden, eager to get a mouthful of fresh air, and all the more as it was a lovely day. . . . There was a ring at the gate bell, and Gostino having opened, I saw five persons advancing up the avenue—three priests and two laymen, all red in the face as turkey-cocks, and talking at the very top of their voices. Sor Cosimo took me by the arm, and drawing me forward, introduced me to the Provost of Siepole and his chaplain, then to the parish priest of the village, and lastly to the assessor Stelloni and the communal secretary.

The talk went on, chiefly on personal and local topics, beginning with the small-pox, which, according to Stelloni, was being “promulgated” in the neighbouring villages, and ending with Sor Cosimo’s fountain, which he regretted he could not turn on for our edification, as Don Paolo kept the key of the mechanism in his own chest of drawers.

Signora Flavia looked at us absently, with sleepy eyes, which she opened wide every time she heard an extra loud clatter of crockery from the kitchen, where Gostino was washing up. Signorina Olimpia, perhaps disgusted with a conversation which was unworthy of her, was wandering

round the garden, casting loving looks at her flowers, till at last, stopping before a monthly rose with two bees on it, she exclaimed: "Dear insects,

"Sucking, for one brief moment,  
Now this, now the other flower,  
Alas! she said——"

"Always a poetess, Signorina Olimpia!" cried the Provost, "always a poetess! Are those your own verses, madam, are they yours?"

"Come now, Olimpia, out with it, before it is too late," urged Sor Cosimo. "The sonnet to Calamai—we must have that at once, for it's a beauty!"

"It is a wonder!" observed the Provost. "Do you know, I have it by heart; I could say it off, as though it were before me in print. It is the only one of yours I have heard."

"Rejoice, O youthful boy . . ."

Signorina Olimpia was preparing to repeat the much-desired sonnet when Don Paolo appeared in the doorway of the house, looking as though he had gone to sleep in his clothes and were just out of bed, and stopped on the threshold, looking fixedly on the ground. They all went up to him, to congratulate him and ask how he felt. . . .

"The heart, gentlemen! the heart!" He put both hands to the left side of his chest, half closing his eyes and twisting his mouth, as if to indicate a spasm which was taking away his breath. Then he asked—

"Have they done anything more at the nets, Cosimo?"

"Five more, Don Paolo!" shouted Gostino from the kitchen.

"Five! Then we've made it fifteen to-day!" cried Don Paolo, reviving as if by magic. "Gostino, my hat and stick!"

Sor Cosimo cast a glance at us to signify that we ought to go to the nets as well, and that this attention would be extremely grateful to his brother. The clergy, however, were

brave enough to refuse, alleging that it would soon be time for vespers. The remaining four of us started—Sor Cosimo, the Secretary, Stelloni, and myself—to the great delight of Don Paolo, who led the way with somewhat uncertain steps, telling me that he had reserved a fine cock bullfinch for the Prior of San Gaggio, and hoped I would do him the favour of taking it to him.

It was now three, and the train left at six. I made various attempts to get away and keep my engagement with my old friend, but no excuse would serve. To say that I had an appointment with the doctor after what I had heard would have been like dealing my hosts a slap in the face, and every stratagem which I devised was vain. I said I wanted to go into the village for cigars, as I had none left; Stelloni offered me half of his. I said I wished to write a post-card; the Secretary informed me I should find the post-office closed, and Sor Cosimo added that he would give me one, and I should write it when we returned from the nets, so that there was nothing for it but to give in.

We had to hurry back, as no one would have dreamed of beginning vespers without Sor Cosimo and Stelloni in the choir. The ladies had a new set of refreshments ready for us when we reached the house; Gostino came to ask when the horse would be wanted, and we set off for the church at increased speed.

Returning from church, I saw the doctor in the distance. He signed to me that he hoped we should meet at Florence, and I went on, feeling like a traitor going to execution, who sees his friends in the crowd and cannot speak to or take leave of them. . . .

Gostino had already harnessed the horse, and seeing this I uttered a sigh of satisfaction. Truly, I was in a pitiable state. I could scarcely stand, tired out with the dawdling but continued motion of the whole day; my digestion



was upset, for obvious reasons ; my head was on fire, and heavy as lead. . . . Oh, for my own house ! But the sigh was abruptly cut short when, just as I was settling myself in the gig, Signora Flavia came calmly up and began to say, while the rest of the household stood motionless to listen—

“See now, as you are so obliging, would you do us a kindness? I have written out all the things, so that you will not forget anything.” And she read out, by the twilight—

“1. *To take Sora Amalia's spectacles to that spectacle-maker at the Canto Alla Paglia*, and have the broken glass mended. Gostino has them in his pocket, and will give them to you at the station.

“2. Five mètres, or else seven yards, just as you think best, of stuff like that of your coat ; to be sent on Thursday by the carrier——”

“Have you written down the bird-seed, Flavia?”

“I have put down everything. Now be quiet . . . by the carrier who puts up just outside the Porta San Frediano, where there is a board with ‘Stabling and coach-house.’”

“And about the wine?” asked Sor Cosimo.

“Here it is. To tell Scatizzi, the wine-seller in Borgognissanti—of course you know him—that if he wants another cartload of the same wine, now is the time.”

“But you’ve forgotten the bird-seed and the bullfinch, after all!” said Don Paolo impatiently.

“Here—now comes your turn.

“4. Three pounds of bird-seed from the man in the little alley which runs from the Via Calzaioli into the Ghetto. Have you put the measure into the box, Gostino?”

“Yes, ma’am ; but please make haste, or we shall be late.”

“5. A bullfinch to be taken to the Prior of San Gaggio.”

“Have you taken it, Gostino?”

“Yes, Master Paolo. He’s tied under the gig.”

"And you'll remember me to him?" said Don Paolo, "and tell him that I caught fifteen to-day, and he is to send and tell me how his nets are doing."

"And here," said Signora Flavia, pointing to a huge bundle tied up at the back of the gig, "I have put together a little country green-stuff for you, as you said you liked it."

"But I . . . really . . . Thank you, Signora Flavia, many thanks."

"And this," said Signorina Olimpia, approaching, "will you keep this in remembrance of me?" She handed me a sheet of paper folded in four, shook my hand three times over, and wished me a pleasant journey. . . . The farewells were said, and we were off. . . .

When we had left the village behind us I cast my eye over Signorina Olimpia's souvenir, and relieved my feelings by one of those hearty laughs which make one feel like a new creature. It was an autograph copy of the sonnet on the ordination of Calamai's son.

*Renato Fucini.*

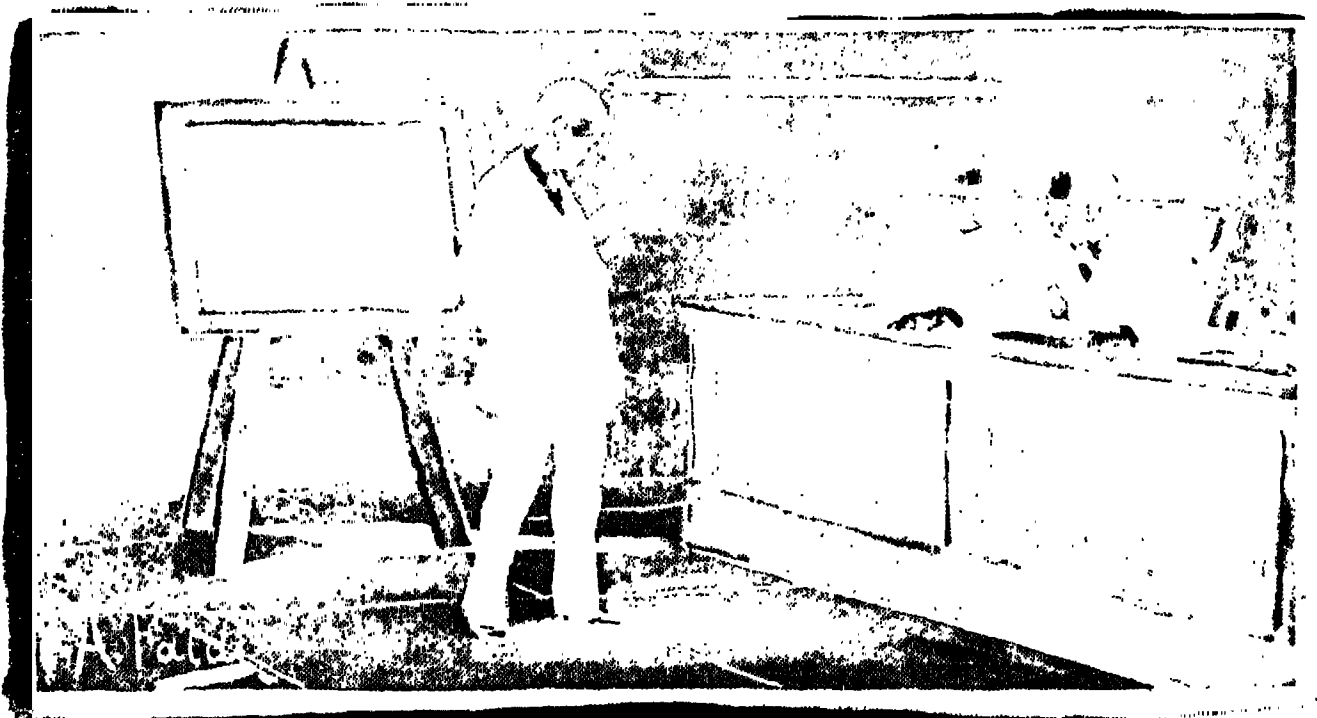
### THE THEOREM OF PYTHAGORAS.

"THE forty-seventh proposition!" said Professor Roveni, in a tone of mild sarcasm, as he unfolded a paper which I had extracted, very gingerly, from an urn standing on his desk. Then he showed it to the Government Inspector who stood beside him, and whispered something into his ear. Finally, he handed me the document, so that I might read the question with my own eyes.

"Go up to the blackboard," added the Professor, rubbing his hands.

The candidate who had preceded me in the arduous trial, and had got out of it as best he could, had left the

school-room on tip-toe, and, in opening the door, let in a long streak of sunshine, which flickered on wall and floor, and in which I had the satisfaction of seeing my shadow. The door closed again, and the room was once more plunged into twilight. It was a stifling day in August, and the great sun-blinds of blue canvas were a feeble defence against the glass, so that the Venetian shutters had been closed as well. The little light which remained was concentrated on the master's desk and the blackboard, and was, at any rate, sufficient to illuminate my defeat.



“Go to the blackboard and draw the figure,” repeated Professor Roveni, perceiving my hesitation.

Tracing the figure was the only thing I knew how to do ; so I took a piece of chalk and conscientiously went to work. I was in no hurry ; the more time I took up in this graphic part, the less remained for oral explanation.

But the Professor was not the man to lend himself to my innocent artifice.

“Make haste,” he said. “You are not going to draw one of Raphael’s Madonnas.”

I had to come to an end.

"Put the letters now. Quick!—you are not giving specimens of handwriting. Why did you erase that G?"

"Because it is too much like the C I have made already. I was going to put an H instead of it."

"What a subtle idea!" observed Roveni, with his usual irony. "Have you finished?"

"Yes, sir," said I; adding under my breath, "More's the pity!"

"Come,—why are you standing there moonstruck? Enunciate the theorem!"

Then began my sorrows. The terms of the question had escaped my memory.

"In a triangle . . ." I stammered.

"Go on."

I took courage and said all I knew.

"In a triangle . . . the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the squares of the other two sides."

"In any triangle?"

"No, no!" suggested a compassionate soul behind me.

"No, sir!" said I.

"Explain yourself. In what sort of a triangle?"

"A right-angled triangle," whispered the prompting voice.

"A right-angled triangle," I repeated, like a parrot.

"Silence there, behind!" shouted the Professor; and then continued, turning to me, "Then, according to you, the big square is equal to each of the smaller ones?"

Good gracious! the thing was absurd. But I had a happy inspiration.

"No, sir, to both of them added together."

"To the sum then,—say to the sum. And you should say *equivalent*, not equal. Now demonstrate."

I was in a cold perspiration—icy cold—despite the tropical temperature. I looked stupidly at the right-angled triangle, the square of the hypotenuse, and its two subsidiary squares; I passed the chalk from one hand to the other

and back again, and said nothing, for the very good reason that I had nothing to say.

No one prompted me any more. It was so still you might have heard a pin drop. The Professor fixed his grey eyes on me, bright with a malignant joy; the Government Inspector was making notes on a piece of paper. Suddenly the latter respectable personage cleared his throat, and Professor Roveni said in his most insinuating manner, "Well?"

I did not reply.

Instead of at once sending me about my business, the Professor wished to imitate the cat which plays with the mouse before tearing it to pieces.

"How?" he added. "Perhaps you are seeking a new solution. I do not say that such may not be found, but we shall be quite satisfied with one of the old ones. Go on. Have you forgotten that you ought to produce the two sides, DE, MF, till they meet? Produce them—go on!"

I obeyed mechanically. The figure seemed to attain a gigantic size, and weighed on my chest like a block of stone.

"Put a letter at the point where they meet—an N. So. And now?"

I remained silent.

"Don't you think it necessary to draw a line down from N through A to the base of the square, BHIC?"

I thought nothing of the kind; however, I obeyed.

"Now you will have to produce the two sides, BH and IC."

Ouf! I could endure no more.

"Now," the Professor went on, "a child of two could do the demonstration. Have you nothing to observe with reference to the two triangles, BAC and NAE?"

As silence only prolonged my torture, I replied laconically, "Nothing."

“In other words, you know nothing at all?”

“I think you ought to have seen that some time ago,” I replied, with a calm worthy of Socrates.

“Very good, very good! Is that the tone you take? And don’t you even know that the theorem of Pythagoras is also called the Asses’ Bridge, because it is just the asses who cannot get past it? You can go. I hope you understand that you have not passed in this examination. That will teach you to read *Don Quixote* and draw cats during my lessons!”

The Government Inspector took a pinch of snuff; I laid down the chalk and the duster, and walked majestically out of the hall, amid the stifled laughter of my school-fellows.

Three or four comrades who had already passed through the ordeal with no very brilliant result were waiting for me outside.

“Ploughed, then?”

“Ploughed!” I replied, throwing myself into an attitude of heroic defiance; adding presently, “I always said that mathematics were only made for dunces.”

• “Of course!” exclaimed one of my rivals.

“What question did you have?” asked another.

“The forty-seventh proposition. What can it matter to me whether the square of the hypotenuse is or is not equal to the sum of the squares of the two sides?”

“Of course it can’t matter to you—nor to me—nor to any one in the world,” chimed in a third with all the petulant ignorance of fourteen. “If it is equal, why do they want to have it repeated so often? and if it is not, why do they bother us with it?”

“Believe me, you fellows,” said I, resuming the discussion with the air of a person of long experience, “you may be quite certain of it, the whole system of instruction is wrong; and as long as the Germans are in the country, it will be so!”

So, being fully persuaded that our failure was a protest against the Austrian dominion, and a proof of vivid and original genius, we went home, where, for my part, I confess I found that the first enthusiasm soon evaporated.

My ignominious failure in this examination had a great influence on my future. Since it was absolutely impossible for me to understand mathematics, it was decided that very day that I was to leave school, especially as the family finances made it necessary for me to begin earning something as soon as might be.

It was the most sensible resolution that could have been come to, and I had no right to oppose it; yet, I confess, I was deeply saddened by it. My aversion to mathematics did not extend to other branches of learning, in which I had made quite a respectable show; and besides, I loved the school. I loved those sacred cloisters which we boys filled with life and noise,—I loved the benches carved with our names,—even the blackboard which had been the witness of my irreparable defeat.

I blamed Pythagoras' theorem for it all. With some other question—who knows?—I might just have scraped through, by the skin of my teeth, as I had done in past years. But, as Fate would have it, it was just that one!

I dreamt about it all night. I saw it before me—the fatal square with its triangle atop, and the two smaller squares, one sloping to the right, and the other to the left, and a tangle of lines, and a great confusion of letters; and heard beating through my head like the strokes of a hammer— $BAC = NAF$ ;  $RNAB = DEAB$ .

It was some time before I was free from that nightmare and could forget Pythagoras and his three squares. In the long run, however, Time, who with his sponge wipes out so many things from the book of memory, had nearly effaced this; when, a few weeks ago, the ill-omened figure appeared to me in one of my son's exercise-books.

"Has this curse been transmitted to my descendants?" I exclaimed. "Poor boy! What if the theorem of Pythagoras should be as fatal to him as it has been to me?"

I thought I would question him about it on his return from school.

"So," I began gravely, "you have already reached the forty-seventh proposition of Euclid in your geometry?"



"Yes, father," he replied simply.

"A difficult theorem," I added, shaking my head.

"Do you think so?" he asked with a smile.

"Oh! you want to boast and make me think you find it easy?"

"But I do find it easy."



"I should like to see you try it"—the words slipped out almost involuntarily. "It's no use—I can't bear vanity and boasting."

"At once," replied the dauntless youth. And action succeeded words. He took a piece of paper and a pencil, and quickly traced the cabalistic figure.

"As for demonstrations," he began, "there are plenty to choose from. Is it all the same to you which I take?"

"Yes," I replied mechanically. In fact it *had* to be all the same to me. If there had been a hundred demonstrations I should not have known one from the other.

"Then we'll take the most usual one," my mathematician went on; and proceeded to produce the lines which Professor Roveni, of respected memory, had made me produce twenty-seven years before, and, with the accents of the sincerest conviction, prepared to prove to me that the triangle BAC was equal to the triangle NAF, and so on.

"And now," said my son, when he had finished, "we can, if you wish, arrive at the same conclusion in another way."

"For pity's sake!" I exclaimed in terror, "since we have reached the journey's end, let us rest."

"But I am not tired."

Not even tired! Was the boy an embryo Newton? And yet people talk about the principle of heredity!

"I suppose you are at the top of your class in mathematics," I said, not untouched by a certain reverential awe.

"No, no," he replied. "There are two better than I. Besides, you know very well that everybody—except downright asses—understands the forty-seventh proposition."

"*Except downright asses!*" After twenty-seven years I heard, from the lips of my own son, almost the very identical words which Professor Roveni had used on the memorable day of the examination. And this time they were heightened by the savage irony of the added "*You know very well!*"

I wished to save appearances, and added in haste—

“Of course I know that. I was only in fun. I hope you would not be such a fool as to be proud of a small thing like that.”

Meanwhile, however, my Newton had repented of his too sweeping assertion.

“After all,” he went on, with some embarrassment, “there are some who never attend to their lesson, and then . . . even if they are not asses . . .”

It seemed to me that he was offering me a loophole of escape, and with a sudden impulse of candour—

“That must be the way of it,” I said. “I suppose I never paid attention.”

“How! You?” exclaimed my boy, reddening to the roots of his hair. Yet . . . I would bet something that, at the bottom of his heart, he was longing to laugh.

I put my hand over his mouth.

“Hush,” I said; “we will not pursue our inquiries into detail”

Well, the Theorem of Pythagoras has, as you see, cost me a new and very serious humiliation. In spite of this, I no longer keep up the old grudge. There will never be any confidence between us, but I consider it as a family friend whom we must not treat with rudeness, though he may not be personally congenial to ourselves.

*Enrico Castelnuovo.*

### AN ECCENTRIC ORDERLY.

OF originals there is a great variety under the canopy of heaven; and I have enjoyed the acquaintance of several, but among them all I never met his match.

He was a Sardinian peasant, twenty years old, unable to read or write, and a private in an infantry regiment.

The first time I saw him, at Florence, in the office of a military journal, he inspired me with a certain sympathy. I soon understood, however, from his looks and some of his answers, that he was a character. His very appearance was paradoxical: seen in front, he was one man; looked at in profile, he was another. Of the full face there was nothing particular to remark; it was a countenance like any other; but it seemed as though in the act of turning his head he became a different man, and the profile had something irresistibly ludicrous about it. The point of his chin and the tip of his nose seemed to be trying to meet, and to be hindered by an enormous thick-lipped mouth which was always open, and showed two rows of teeth, uneven as a file of national guards. His eyes were scarcely larger than pin-heads, and disappeared altogether among the wrinkles into which his face was puckered when he laughed. His eyebrows were shaped like two circumflex accents, and his forehead was scarcely high enough to keep his hair out of his eyes. A friend of mine remarked to me that he seemed to be one of Nature's practical jokes. And yet his face expressed intelligence and good-nature; but an intelligence which was, so to speak, sporadic, and a good-nature entirely *sui generis*. He spoke, in a harsh, hoarse voice, an Italian for which he had every right to claim the inventor's patent.

"How do you like Florence?" I asked, seeing that he had arrived in that city the day before.

"It's not bad," he replied.

Coming from a man who had previously only seen Cagliari, and one or two small towns in Northern Italy, the answer seemed to savour of a certain austerity.

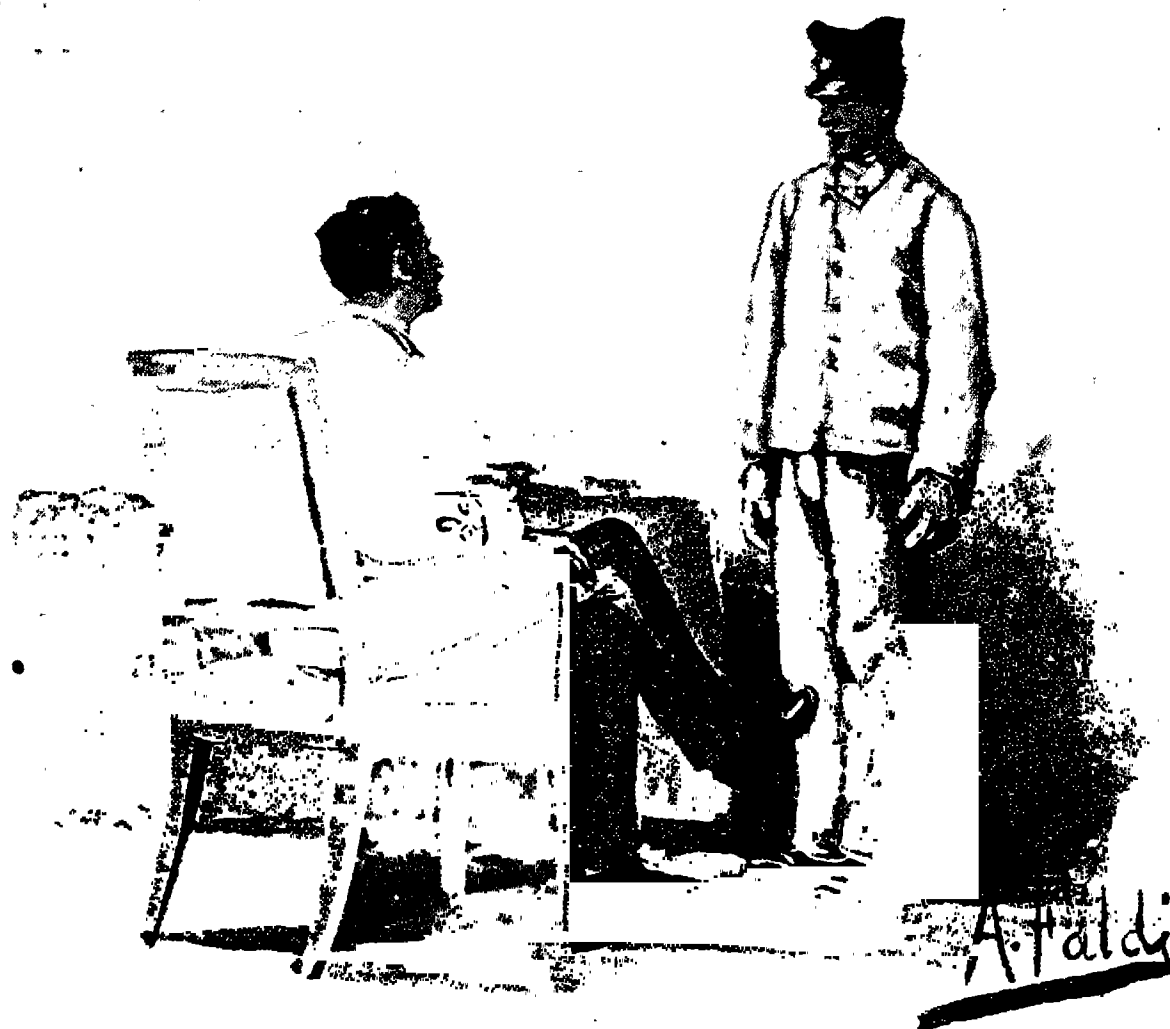
"Do you like Florence or Bergamo best?"

"I arrived yesterday—I couldn't say yet."

The following day he made his entry into my quarters.

During the first week I was more than once within an ace of losing all patience, and sending him back to the regiment.

If he had contented himself with understanding nothing, I could have let that pass, but the misfortune was, that partly through the difficulty he had in understanding my Italian, partly through the unaccustomed nature of his tasks, he understood about half, and did everything the wrong way. Were I to relate how he carried my razors to the publisher, and my manuscripts ready for the press to the razor grinder; how he left a French novel with the shoemaker, and a pair of boots to be mended at a lady's house, no one who had



not seen him would believe me. But I cannot refrain from relating one or two of his most marvellous exploits.

At eleven in the forenoon—which was the time when the morning papers were cried about the streets—it was my custom to send him out for some ham for my breakfast. One morning, knowing that there was an item in the paper that I wished to see, I said to him hurriedly, “Quick! the ham, and the *Corriere Italiano*.” He could never take in

two distinct ideas at once. He went out, and returned shortly afterwards with the ham wrapped up in the *Corriere*.

One morning he was present when I was showing one of my friends a splendid military atlas, which I had borrowed from the library; and he heard me remark to the latter: "The mischief is that one cannot see all these maps at a glance, and has to examine each one separately. To follow the whole course of a battle I should like to have them nailed up on the wall in their proper order, so as to form a single diagram." On coming in that evening—I shudder still when I think of it—all the maps in that atlas were neatly nailed to the wall; and, to add to my sufferings, he appeared before me next morning, with the modestly complacent smile of the man who expects a compliment.

But all this is nothing to what I underwent before I had succeeded in teaching him to put my rooms in order—I do not say as I wanted them—but in a manner remotely suggesting the presence of a rational being. For him, the supreme art of putting things to rights consisted in piling them one on top of the other, and his great ambition was to build them up into structures of the greatest possible altitude. During the first few days of his tenure of office my books formed a semicircle of towers, which trembled at the lightest breath; the washhand basin, turned upside down, sustained a daring pyramid of plates, cups, and saucers, at the top of which my shaving-brush was planted; and my hats, new and old, rose, in the form of a triumphal pillar, to a dizzy height. As a consequence there occurred—usually at dead of night—ruinous collapses, which made a noise like a small earthquake, and scattered my property to such an extent that, if it had not been for the walls of the room, no one knows where it would have brought up. To make him understand that my tooth-brush

did not belong to the genus hair-brush, and that the pomade-jar was not the same as the vessel which contained Liebig's extract, required the eloquence of Cicero and the patience of Job.

I have never been able to understand whether my attempts to treat him kindly met with any response on his part. Once only he showed a certain solicitude for my personal welfare, and this was exhibited in a manner quite peculiar to himself. I had been ill in bed for about a fortnight, and neither got worse nor showed any signs of recovery. One evening he stopped the doctor—an exceedingly touchy man—on the stairs, and asked him, abruptly, "But, once for all, are you going to cure him, or are you not?" The doctor lost his temper, and fairly blew him up. "It's only that it's lasting rather long," was my orderly's sole response.

It is difficult to give any idea of the language he spoke—a mixture of Sardinian, Lombard, and Italian, with idioms all his own; elliptical sentences, mutilated and contracted words, verbs in the infinitive flung about haphazard. The whole was like the talk of a man in delirium. At the end of five or six months, by dint of attending the regimental schools, he learnt, to my misfortune, to read and write after a fashion. While I was out of the house he used to practise writing at my table, and would write the same word a couple of hundred times over. Usually it was a word he had heard me pronounce when reading, and which, for some reason or other, had made an impression on him. One day, for instance, he was struck by the name of Vercingetorix. When I came home in the evening I found *Vercingetorix* written on the margins of the newspapers, on the backs of my proofs, on the wrappers of my books, on my letters, on the scraps in the waste-paper basket—in every place where he could find room for the thirteen letters beloved of his heart. Another day the word

*Ostrogoths* touched his soul, and on the next my rooms were invaded by the *Ostrogoths*. In like manner, a little later, the place was full of *rhinoceroses*.

On the other hand, I was so far a gainer by this extension of knowledge on his part, that I was no longer obliged to mark with crosses, in differently coloured chalks, the notes I gave him to deliver to various people. There was no way of making him remember the names; but he got to know my correspondents as the blue lady, the black journalist, the yellow Government official, etc.

Speaking of writing, I discovered a habit of his, much more curious than the one I have mentioned. He had bought himself a note-book, into which he copied, from every book that fell into his hands, the author's dedication to his parents or relations, taking care always to substitute for the names of the latter those of his father, his mother, and his brothers, to whom he imagined he was thus giving a brilliant proof of affection and gratitude. One day I opened this book and read, among others, the following:—  
“Pietro Tranci (the Sardinian peasant, his father), born in poverty, acquired, by study and perseverance, a distinguished place among men of learning, assisted his parents and brothers, and worthily educated his children. To the memory of his excellent father this book is dedicated by the author, Antonio Tranci”—instead of Michele Lessona.

On another page he had copied the dedication of Giovanni Prati's poems, beginning as follows:—“To Pietro Tranci, my father, who, announcing to the Subalpine Parliament the disaster of Novara, fell fainting to the ground and died within a few days, I consecrate this song,” etc., etc.

What astonished me most in one who had seen so little was an absolute lack of the feeling of wonder. During the time he was at Florence he saw the festivities at Prince

Humbert's marriage, the opera, and the dancing at the Pergola (he had never been inside a theatre in his life), the Carnival, and the fantastic illumination of the Celli Avenue. He saw a hundred other things which were quite new to him, and which ought, one would think, to have surprised him, amused him, made him talk. Nothing of the sort. His admiration never went beyond the formula, "Not bad!" Santa Maria del Fiore—not bad! Giotto's tower—not bad! the Pitti Palace—not bad! I really believe that if the Creator in person had asked what he thought of the universe he would have replied that it was not bad.

From the first day of his stay to the last his mood never changed; he continually preserved a kind of cheerful seriousness: always obedient, always muddle-headed, always most conscientious in understanding things the wrong way, always plunged in a kind of apathetic beatitude, always with the same extravagance of eccentricity. On the day when his term of service expired he scribbled away for several hours in his note-book with the same calm as on other days. Before leaving he came to say good-bye to me. There was not much tenderness in our parting. I asked him if he was sorry to leave Florence. He answered, "Why not?" I asked him if he was glad to return home. He replied with a grimace which I did not understand.

"If you ever want anything, sir," he said at the last moment, "write to me, and I shall always be pleased to do anything I can for you."

"Many thanks," I replied.

And so he left the house, after being with me over two years, without the slightest sign either of regret or pleasure.

I looked after him as he went downstairs.

Suddenly he turned round.

"Ah!" thought I, "now we shall see! His heart has



been awakened. He is coming back to take leave in a different sort of way!"

Instead of which—

"Lieutenant," he said, "your shaving-brush is in the drawer of the biggest table, sir!"

With that he disappeared.

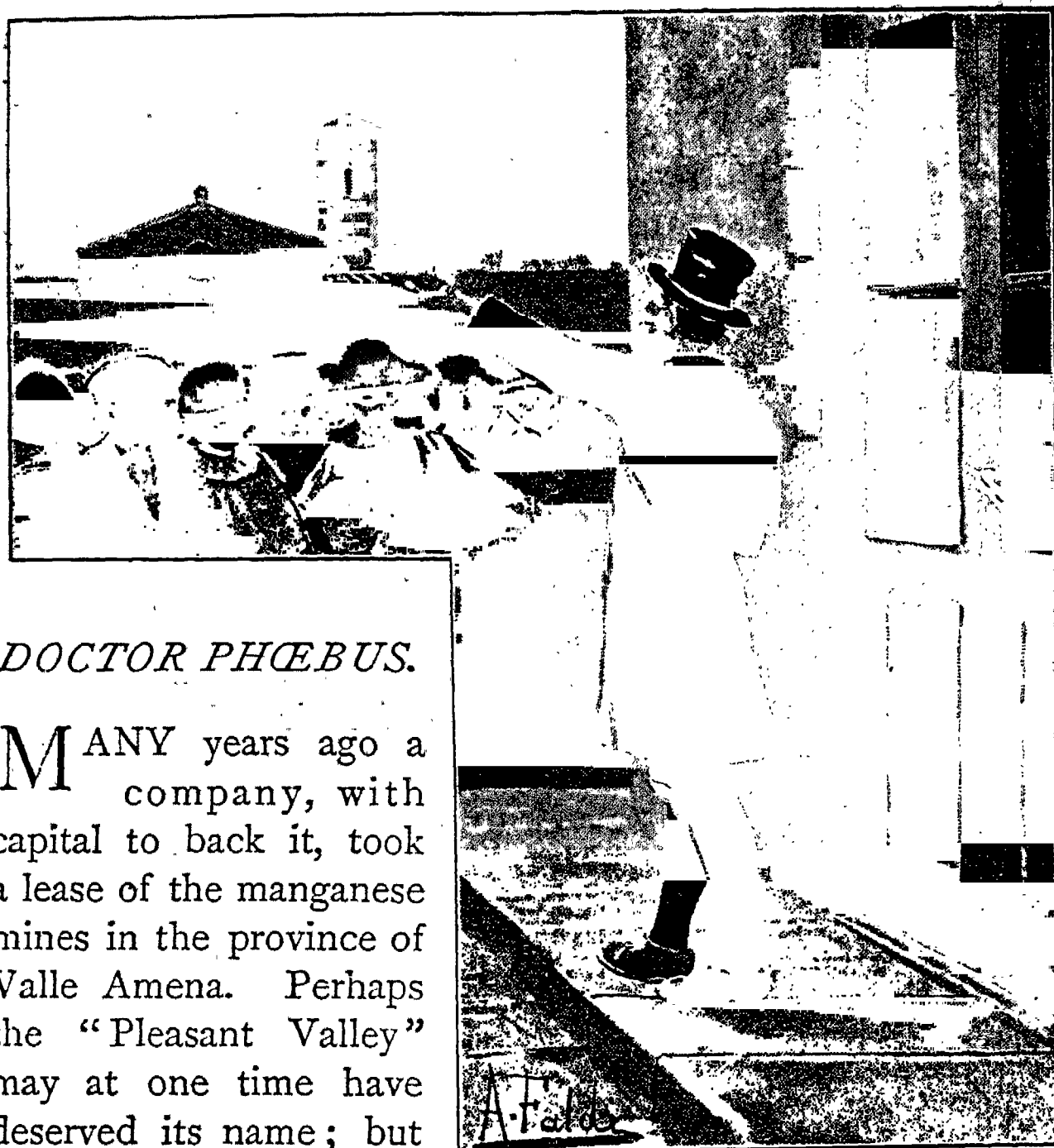
*Edmondo de Amicis.*

### *A PROVINCIAL ORACLE.*

. . . THE newly-married couple settled in a small country town, where they were not long in gaining the hearts of all the inhabitants. The more sensible and influential people in the place thought the advent of such wealthy residents a great piece of good fortune. "They will be of so much advantage to the place," was the remark made in the chemist's shop of an evening. It soon began to rain advantages: dinner parties, picnics, gifts, patronage, entertainments for charitable objects—hospitalities of all sorts; and then the balls at carnival-tide! A dash, a gaiety, a profusion that one could neither believe nor imagine—a splendour, the memory of which, as all the local journals put it, "would flourish with perennial vigour in the hearts of a grateful community." We thought we had returned to the very flower of the golden age of Arcadia. It was two talents, more especially, which won golden opinions for Signor Diego among the worthy citizens of our little borough—his magnificent expenditure and his wit. Of Attic salt he had as much as sufficed, within a very short space of time, to pickle the whole place; whereby it became one of the wittiest towns in the world. I do not say that the inhabitants did not possess a great deal of wit before he arrived; nor do I wish to hint that the conversation of the educated persons who visited at the house of Diego was mere insipid

triviality coloured with a little presumption, and that touch of perfidy which is, so to speak, the *sauce piquante* of empty gossip. No, indeed ! for they, too, took their share in public life and talked politics, speaking highly of themselves and of the party in power, and exceedingly ill of those who were not present to hear them. But what I mean is that Signor Diego, profiting by all that he had learnt in his travels, showed them a more excellent—that is to say, a more Parisian way, and taught them the great mystery of *chic*. He instructed them in all those arts of gilding and veneering, by means of which the most contemptible trifles may be made to appear noble and graceful. He taught them to laugh at serious matters, but to take the most religious care—practising the worship of themselves with unheard-of austerity and entire self-devotion—of their hair and their coats, and the dignity of their attitudes and movements; and to pronounce sentence with the extremest rigour on the unfortunate who should transgress the least important of the rules established by social etiquette.

*Mario Pratesi.*



### *DOCTOR PHŒBUS.*

MANY years ago a company, with capital to back it, took a lease of the manganese mines in the province of Valle Amana. Perhaps the "Pleasant Valley" may at one time have deserved its name; but nowadays there is nothing pleasant about the monotonous barren hills, of no use to any one but the goats, and the distant woods, too scanty to lend any tint of green to the dry and desert landscape. The company's employés were scarcely to be blamed for not liking the place; everything was scarce, even pretty faces—at least such as had had the benefit of soap and water. But the pay was good, and more than one among them had hopes of becoming a shareholder, or at least cashier; and so things went on somehow or other. Two hundred navvies pushed the work rapidly

forward, and enormous trucks full of the grey metal blocked the postal road day and night.

But all that glitters is not gold; and one day the report spread that the flourishing company had failed, as though prosperity had undermined its foundations like stagnant water. It made a great talk in the neighbourhood, and every one concluded his or her comments by long exclamations of astonishment.

"*Mah!*" ejaculated the old, dried-up chaplain of the *Misericordia*,<sup>1</sup> with his hands in the pockets of the threadbare shooting-coat which he always wore except when he put on his surplice to go and fetch the dead. "In my opinion it was just like when a set of people leave the gaming-table, where low cards have been dealt; but they do not all leave with the same advantages."

"There is no getting at the exact truth," remarked the landlord of the village inn, who did not repent nearly so much of his sins as he did of having given credit; "but in this business I too believe that the rogues have done the honest men who trust their neighbours, and never suspect any cheating."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Signor Vincenzino; and perhaps he would have said more, only that, being syndic, and very rich, he thought it possible he might be risking the chance of a decoration. He rose from his seat in the Caffé del Giappone. "In any case," he continued, keeping his back turned to the host, "there is the law."

"I'd like to see it!" replied mine host. "But it's very seldom that rogues who have grown rich do not find some one to help them, in one way or another, in keeping what they have stolen."

"Precisely!" retorted the chaplain, holding up his finger like Dante under the Uffizi. "There are certain experts and certain lawyers who show a most extraordinary ability

<sup>1</sup> See Note 5 at end.

in this respect, and acquire enormous credit, so that sometimes the Government is even forced to raise them to the rank of *Commendatore*. You alone, poor Phœbus . . .”

And so on, and so on. . . . It would be tedious to repeat all the conversation that took place at the Caffé del Giappone. As to Phœbus, however, I should not be altogether disposed to agree with the chaplain. If Phœbus found no one to make the best of the arguments on his side when—having been blinded by the effects of an explosion at the works—he asked for a miserable little pension, which the Company refused, saying that his misfortune was due to his own carelessness, and not to the necessities of his work,—if, I say, he had no one to plead his cause, this must be regarded merely as an accident, which happened to him, as it may happen to hundreds of others in a like condition. Then came the crash; and if a company were going to give every man what he wants, what motive could it have for declaring itself insolvent. In this case, to recommend the fulfilment of any humane duties is like running after a mist-wreath, or asking a routed army, in full retreat, to think of the dead and wounded they are leaving behind.

I do not deny that the consequences were certainly unpleasant for Phœbus, who had now eaten nothing for three days, and sat in the chimney-corner, yawning and stretching his arms to such an amazing extent, first in one direction, and then in another, that he looked like the castle of St. Angelo when the fireworks are being let off on Easter Day. A miserable hen, which sat motionless, not daring to attract attention to itself, and a cat which seemed to have nothing more to wish for in this life, having now reached the very utmost degree of leanness, and lay curled up, with half-closed eyes, on the dead ashes of the hearth, were the only creatures not audibly complaining in the melancholy darkness of the hut, which covered so much misery. It seemed as though they were meditating on the

infinite vanity of things. But not so Phœbus's wife, nor Vittorino, his little son ; for the one, by continual whimpering, and the other with her reproaches, added notes of sickening despair to the symphony of those sonorous, expansive, and well-nourished yawns of the blind man. Yet the wife had not the slightest reason for envying the cat ; she was dry and thin as though she had nothing left for hunger and grief to gnaw at ;—she was near her confinement, poor soul, and, with her face the colour of sodden



dead leaves, and her black eyes, greedy, feverishly bright, and sunken in their sockets, she was a very different person from the comely young Rosalinda whom Phœbus had married when he returned from serving in the *Bersaglieri*. That was six months before the accident at the quarries ; and now she was more like one of the thirsty, dropsical wretches in Dante's "Malebolge."

"Go to Sor Vincenzino," said Phœbus.

His wife did not reply.

"Go to the doctor."

"Don't you know that a hundred poor sinners might die before either of *them* would stir a finger? Don't you know

that the doctor keeps on asking me for a franc for that tooth he pulled out last year?"

Phœbus moved his jaws for a little while, like an animal chewing the cud; then he gave seven or eight more yawns, and rubbed his hands as if he had just concluded a good stroke of business.

"Go to Nannone—go to the chaplain, to the archdeacon, to Lisetta—only go to some one!"

"I went to Nannone this morning—he was not at home. I went to the chaplain yesterday, and he gave me that bread. I went to Lisetta the day before yesterday, and she gave me that *polenta*. And who's going to the archdeacon's, with that vixen of a Modesta there? Not I!"

"Then, you ugly slug, you cannot be hungry, and must just eat your own talk!"

The wife rose, sobbing and muttering curses, and went out, dragging the water-jar with her as usual, as an excuse for knocking at people's doors. When they opened, however, it was something more than permission to draw water at the well that she wanted—her errand was more serious than that.

To-day she did not find them disposed to listen to tales of misery, for it was the last day of the carnival, and the weather was bright and clear. A cold wind kept the sky cloudless, and the sun, going down in the west, seemed to embrace the whole sky and earth with its rays, and smiled among the shadows and on the peaks of the snowy Apennines, which gradually faded away into the distance on the last clear rim of the horizon. But the village, all but the great ruined tower on the little piazza, the upper part of which was still in light, began to grow dark; and it was already dusk in the ancient, narrow streets, black as if after a conflagration, filled with crowds of country folk, among which the red shawls of the jolly peasant women made bright points here and there, and noisy with cymbals and other instruments, laughter, and shouting.

This, then, was not a propitious moment. In fact, Rosalinda was not long in returning, with her pitcher and her hands both empty. The people, nearly all poor, were tired of her continual requests, and by this time the pitcher trick was becoming stale.

“Eh!” said her husband, rubbing his hands as usual. “I suppose they would not open their doors to you, because it is winter, and they are afraid of the cold coming in?”

“Be quiet!” screamed Rosalinda to the child. “Be quiet, or I’ll make an end of you!”

“Be quiet, Vittorino,” repeated Phœbus. “This evening we shall have twenty loaves and some roast meat! Wife! you be quiet too, and give me those things that ought to be in the box!”

The things were a heap of rags, on the top of which lay a worn-out tall hat, very old, but seeming still to remember its former owner; for to those who had never seen him in any other hat for years and years it was impossible not to be instantly reminded of that wrinkled, benevolent, patient face, whose serious sadness was rather added to than diminished by the somewhat long chin and Dantesque nose. The other things—a waistcoat, knee-breeches, and a very long black overcoat—had very evidently belonged to an extremely poor and unfortunate priest.

But Vittorino began to laugh and dance when he saw his father put on not only this Court suit, as it seemed to him, which his wife handed him, grumbling and crying at the same time, but a pair of huge horse-hair whiskers and an enormous paper collar, the points of which reached nearly to the tip of his nose.

Not only this, but a wave of merriment ran through the whole village, like the ripple which a puff of wind makes in the surface of the lagoon, when Phœbus issued from his door thus dressed, with a huge book containing the whole series of ancient medical prescriptions under his arm. Some people insisted on recognising in his icy smile, in those



remedies so learnedly prescribed in his slow, pompous manner, in that awkward, straddling walk, Doctor Ambrogio, the village physician for forty years, who was also surgeon, veterinary surgeon, and dentist. As dentist his renown had attracted people from the remotest villages; and for the expense and trouble he had undergone to acquire it he expected compensation even from the poor, though in justice it must be said (and this shows Doctor Ambrogio's fair-mindedness), much less than from the rich.

Other masks made a cheerful variation in the crowd—*stenterelli*,<sup>1</sup> with painted faces and pigtails curled up like a point of interrogation, harlequins, Turks, madmen, wizards, and big, bearded creatures got up as nurses, and carrying turkeys swathed up in baby-clothes; which birds, pushing their red-wattled heads out from among the bandages, never imagined—though they seemed astonished and confused enough already—the slaughter which was to befall them later on. The women, with bright eyes and laughing lips, hung over each other's shoulders, in the windows and on the balconies, to get a sight of Phœbus. Only when he began to give utterance to certain jokes at which no girl—and not even a married woman—can very well laugh in public, then they knitted their brows, while the men, looking at them, laughed fit to kill themselves. Then his popularity grew; then it seemed as though Plenty thought fit to empty her cornucopia over Phœbus; then the public liberality knew no limits, and down were showered steaks, and bread, and sausages, and *polpette*,<sup>2</sup> and *maritozzi*,<sup>3</sup> and *ballotte*,<sup>4</sup> and *strozza-prete*,<sup>5</sup> and apples, and *schiacciatunta*,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Dumplings, sometimes made of meat.

<sup>3</sup> A kind of bun, filled with pine kernels inside.

<sup>4</sup> Chestnuts boiled in the shell.

<sup>5</sup> A sour kind of pear or plum.

<sup>6</sup> A kind of flat cake, very popular in rural Tuscany.

and rosemary cake, and millet puddings—all poured on the devoted head of Phœbus, who, without putting the smallest morsel into his mouth, stuffed the whole into the front of his waistcoat, into his hat, and into all the pockets of his overcoat and trousers.

Yet none the less did he continue to look like Famine, or Lent personified, come to play the fool in the midst of all that courteous and kindly merriment. The clumsy black spectacles—with the glasses broken and mended with black sealing-wax—with which he covered the horrible sight presented by his burnt eyes, seemed of themselves to darken him, and take away every touch of life and mobility from his worn face, white as old wax, which might have been taken for that of an old man or one far gone in consumption, if it had not been for the intensely black hair, and the figure, which, though below the middle height, was broad in the chest, and all muscles and sinews. If his hair had been white he would not have moved people's compassion so much as he did when they saw him still fresh and robust; for thus his lot appeared peculiarly unjust and cruel, paralysing his strong arms, and robbing him of so many years of ease gained by hard labour, and reducing him instead to the necessity of asking alms, which were so limited, and not always kindly given. Nevertheless, on account of that habit he had of smiling and rubbing his hands when speaking, many people thought him a merry and light-hearted man who was fond of his joke.

The shouting crowd hustled him out on the little square, where rises the gloomy tower—at that moment lit up by the last rays of the sun, with the hawks wheeling, in the blue sky, round the top.

Doctor Ambrogio, standing at the door of the chemist's shop, looked like Æsculapius himself, with his ruddy, well-nourished face, full of severe learning, and his long white beard, under which appeared, wound several times round

his neck, a heavy scarlet woollen scarf. If this physician, who was great at blood-letting and cupping, had remained a little behind the times, the chemist had by no means done so; and in this instance the old and the new generation joined hands. For the chemist, emulous of his city colleagues, had sold to a Florentine dealer in antiquities the phials and vases of glazed terra-cotta and the dried Nile crocodile, which, hanging with widely-opened jaws from the middle of the ceiling, had formerly given an uncanny idea of medical science and the apothecary's art, as though they had been devouring monsters. Moreover, he had decorated his shop with all the latest improvements—gilt boxes and ornamental stoppers, chalybeate water, and purgative syrups enclosed in cut-glass bottles; and he never sold an ounce of cream of tartar or bitter salts without doing it up in a little bag of glazed paper. All this elegance certainly raised the price of his commodities; but only consider how much it added to the efficiency of the drugs!

Here, right in front of this luxurious establishment, Phœbus stood still, in the midst of the crowd, opened his book, turned over the pages, and after discoursing for some time, concluded by prescribing Dr. Ambrogio, who was still standing in the doorway, and who suffered from *sciatica*, *a decoction of asinine cucumber*.

Dr. Ambrogio turned his back, closed the glass door, and said to Sor Vincenzino, who was seated on the sofa reading the paper: "This blind man is a public nuisance, and I cannot think why you don't get him out of the way. If I were syndic . . ."

"If you were syndic you would know what red-tape and difficulties and formalities are! Last year I tried to send him to the hospital for the blind at . . . , and they sent him back because he was not a native of the place."

"Yes, I remember. I gave him as full a certificate as I could to get him away from here. Good heavens! If

this town is not a nest of wretchedness, I don't know what is."

The chaplain, who was also in the shop waiting for the chemist, seemed touched to the quick, and said—

"It is the fault of the rich. If the rich were to think more about giving work——"

But the doctor interrupted him.

"Here we are with the rich again! Can't you understand, sir, that the rich have too many taxes?" The syndic nodded approvingly. "It's the Government that's in fault," said the doctor. "Here's the dilemma, and there's no getting out of it:—Either they ought to take off the income-tax, or they, and not we, should see to the feeding of these starving wretches."

"Very true! Just the thing I have so often thought," answered the syndic. "Because if they were to take off the income-tax, that sum would remain in the treasury; but it cannot remain there, because the funds have to be turned to account; and for doing this labour is needed, and labour being needed it has to be paid for, and being paid for, why, there you are. Then people have something to eat! Why, that's quite clear, gentlemen! No difficulty in understanding that!"

"There was no need for your explanation," returned the chaplain, shrugging his shoulders with a slightly vexed look as he rose from the sofa, stretching out his legs, which appeared, long and thin as those of a blackbird, under the skirts of his wretched coat. "Even the poor countess paid income-tax; yet at the end of the year she had spent a pretty large sum in good works. But her heirs have inherited her money and not her merciful heart."

"That is just the sort of speech you might be expected to make, belonging as you do to the *Misericordia*," said the doctor, with a quietly contemptuous smile.

"And a ruined man into the bargain!" whispered

Sor Vincenzino into the doctor's ear. "Later on, some time, I'll tell you a little story about his niece."

"Throwing away one's own money in that fashion," the doctor went on, with a solemn air of wisdom, "is not charity; it is merely carrying out the whims of hysteria; and the countess was hysterical from the tip of her great toe to the ends of her hair. It's a question of organisation. You're far behind the times, chaplain!"

"You had better take care. I may be in advance of you!"

"Everything *may* be; but that there ought to be methods and limits even in charity, for otherwise even great fortunes would fall into ruin, this indisputable and precious axiom of economic science, I am afraid—excuse me—you are not acquainted with. And with interest, you know, there is no joking."

Sor Vincenzino concluded his approving nods by one of final and comprehensive assent; and wishing to convey clearly to the chaplain that, in short, he thought nothing of him, he turned his back on him, and set himself, with a diplomatic countenance, to meditate over his newspaper. The chaplain understood that, and with his simple face full of grave sadness, and his white hair curling over his temples, remained standing, waiting patiently for the medicine for his poor, pretty niece, who was ill. The doctor kept looking out of the window, and saying to himself, "I should like to know what has become of the police! They ought to make an example and dismiss them both! If I saw one of them I'd tell him to make that rascal hold his tongue!"

"To-day I cure every one for nothing!" Doctor Phœbus was shouting in the midst of the crowd. "To-morrow it will be too late! Yes, it will be too late, unhappy people! If you have not enough to live upon—if you do not pay me a proper fee for every visit—if you don't want to pay a high

price for medicines, and buy them here of my good friend the chemist, who is the only man who sells good ones—why then, unhappy wretches, you can be no patients of mine! Then you will have to go to the hospital—our hospital!—where he who goes in never comes out any more! What with fasting, and poultices, and gruel without salt, mallow-water and cuppings, in a week you will either be cured or gone where you want no more curing.”

At this point the last glimmer of the fiery sunset, the sound of the great church bell, and the rattle of a drum which was going round announcing the “Last Wonderful Comedy of the Burattini,” distracted the audience. A man slipped out of the Caffé del Giappone, in the dusk, with baking-pan full of pastry, just out of the oven, and hastened to carry it to the Casino for the evening’s festivity. It was duly evident from all the going and coming that there were great things in the air. Not only at the Casino, but there was to be dancing at Sora Carmelinda’s and at Sor Gregorio’s; there was to be dancing at the taverns, in the space between the wine-casks, and in the hay-lofts at the farms; for all which occasions there had been secretly stored up in every house masks and half-masks and *papier-mâché* noses, in which one could be perfectly certain of not being recognised. Time was pressing; the drum had ceased to beat and the bell to ring, and instead one could hear stray barrel-organs, to whose sound little companies of peasants came trooping in along the dark lanes; and here and there, scattered through the streets of the merry little town, the shouting and laughter which had previously been all concentrated in the square. Then Phœbus found that he had been left alone, in a deeper darkness than before. He stretched out his numbed hands in order to give them a joyful rub; but the long tight overcoat, now stuffed out with the bounty showered on him, got in his way; he tried to stoop and to raise his arms, but this too was a failure. He was

impatient to get home quickly, and instead of being able to do so he was forced to grope his way slowly along those noisy streets, where he could scarcely find room to set his stick down.

"Wife! Vittorino! help! I can get no farther! Wife! Come and help me unload the casks full of presents my patients have given me!" he began to shout when he was a few paces from the house.

His wife and Vittorino hurried to meet him, and relieved him of his load in a twinkling; and having entered the house, all three ate like wolves, finding, moreover, here and there among the spoils, a piece of cod's head or a rotten apple, flung for a joke, which were thankfully received by the cat and the hen, now awakened; so provident is Nature.

Then, unluckily, Phœbus said to his wife, "This evening, at least, dear, you are not going to complain!" Alas! it was like putting the match to the powder-magazine. She had been quiet; but the words seemed to set her going afresh, and she began again—shrieks, tears, and lamentations; how much reason she had for complaining, and how much for thinking of the next day, and how much better it would have been if she had always remained single.

Then Phœbus began, in good earnest, to blaspheme like a heretic, in the brutal Tuscan way. Yet, being quick-witted and kind-hearted beyond the average, he understood that such a burst of temper, after all anxiety had been removed by so abundant a supper, could only have been caused by the state of her health; and he resisted the temptation of bringing her to her senses by a good beating. Instead of that, he shuddered, pitied her, and sat down comfortably in the chimney-corner without saying another word.

But poor little Vittorino, cheered by the unaccustomed supper, began to sing and jump about in that gloomy den, just like a bird which has seen the sun rise. Only the poor

woman felt as if her nerves were being torn to pieces by the noise ; and she thought the child, young as he was, ought to have understood that there was cause rather for crying than laughing. Then he began to cry ; but that, also, would not do ; he was to be quiet and not let himself be heard in any way. The child obeyed with a sigh, and the mother then took him in her arms, soothing, petting, and kissing him. But these caresses of his mother's, who was sobbing after having beaten him (the blind man was singing to himself the whole time), could not draw a smile from him ; tired out and very serious, he fell asleep in her arms, and she laid him down on the ghastly mattress and stretched herself beside him. And after that there was nothing more to be seen or heard in the room. . . .

They were all asleep, even Phœbus, who loved sleep because it gave him back his liberty. By day, when he was awake, there was always a cloud surrounding him, and he fancied that he had to bore his way through it, as a mole bores through the ground, to find the sun he had lost. But that dark path went on and on, and never came to an end ; ~~it~~ it was only in the darkness of night that he could even see the sun again, when he slept and dreamed that he was no longer blind, but could move about freely as before, with his eyes open and seeing. Then he saw them all again—not his little Vittorino, for the child had been born since his misfortune, and the father had never looked on his bright eyes and pretty features ; but his wife, and his parents, and his mates, and sometimes lovely distant landscapes that he had never seen before. . . . He had never had such beautiful dreams before he became blind. . . .

But that night he did not sleep sound, for a hand shook him roughly as he sat in the dark corner of the hearth, and recalled him to the reality of things—namely, to the belfry tower to ring the bells, according to orders received from the archdeacon, from eleven o'clock to midnight, in order



to announce the beginning of Lent, and warn people against breaking in on the fast and vigil.

At the command, then, of Phœbus, still masquerading as the doctor, two beggars, acting as his subordinates, who had already entered the tower and seized the bell-ropes, began bending their backs and rising again to the swing of the bells—a “double” so loud and eloquent in the gloomy silence as to reach even the most distant cabins, where some ancient oaks marked the boundary of the parish. But for a great many the bells tolled in vain. Nay, some masks even went and stood under the archdeacon’s windows, making unseemly noises, howling and whistling with the intention of annoying him. And in some hay-lofts the young men, laughing at the remonstrances of the old and the continued tolling of the bells, kept up the dancing till day-break, amid the smoke of the pipes and the sawing of the violins. The girls, it is true, were somewhat recalcitrant; but with a few scruples of conscience and a little remorse, they let themselves be whirled away, after a while, willingly enough.

After ringing for an hour, Phœbus, hearing the archdeacon’s maid-servant call him from a window, entered, with his companion, the corridor of that dignitary’s house, and having cautiously knocked at a door, was told to come in. They entered a large room lit by an old-fashioned brass lamp. Facing the door, at a little round table, smoking and sipping punch, after having finished their game at chess, sat the good archdeacon, a jolly man of portly presence, verging upon seventy; Cavalier Vincenzino, the syndic, with bye-laws and civic enactments clearly written on the folds of his brow and the curves of his mouth; and the preaching friar, an elderly and hypocritical Franciscan, with red hair and a round face, who had arrived that very day to preach the Lenten sermons. When Phœbus and his companions entered, the friar hid his modest little pipe in his wide

sleeve, and produced instead a snuff-box,<sup>1</sup> from which he immediately offered a pinch to the syndic and the archdeacon, who readily accepted. The archdeacon, seeing Phœbus appear before him in that burlesque costume, and with that crushed and battered chimney-pot hat, threw back the tassel of his black skull-cap, which was dangling close to his left ear, and nearly choked himself with laughter. Modesta, the maid, who made a glorious entry, carrying a large dish of steaming meat-dumplings, hastened to set them down on the other table, which was ready laid in the middle of the room, so that she might scratch her head and laugh, like her master—or even louder and longer. This pleased neither the preaching friar nor the syndic, and they whispered together, looking deeply scandalised.

“*Persicomele !*”<sup>2</sup> exclaimed the archdeacon, “are you going about masked after the stroke of twelve? And what sort of a costume might this be?”

“It is the costume of a doctor of medicine!”

“Dear archdeacon, my dear sir!” said the Franciscan, pointing at Phœbus, “this suit of clothes has belonged to a priest; do you not see the black stockings, the knee-breeches, the waistcoat? Archdeacon, it is not the proper thing to let the clothes of the clergy be seen in a masquerade.”

“*Persicomele !*” exclaimed the archdeacon, looking more closely, as he passed his hand over his knees, as if dusting his breeches. “Who gave you these clothes?”

“The chaplain!”

“Good! very good!” exclaimed the syndic, chuckling with delight, but he immediately resumed the calm, severe, and munificent aspect of the person who has to sign municipal edicts.

“It seems impossible that, at the present day, certain

<sup>1</sup> See Note 6 at end.

<sup>2</sup> “Peaches and apples!” See remarks on oaths, adjurations, etc., in Introduction.

priests should have so little respect for their cloth!" said the Franciscan indignantly. "Fatal effects, my dear sir! . . ."  
And he took an enormous pinch of snuff, with both hands.

"You must not believe, reverend father," replied the syndic, with some heat, "that the chaplain gives the law to our commune; he is a——"

"Sir!" exclaimed the archdeacon.

"But you don't know——"

"I don't want to know. The chaplain is a priest, and that's enough! Find me another who for 260 francs will take the services of the *Misericordia* the whole year round, who will go ten or twelve miles on foot, in the depth of winter, or in the dog-days, to attend a funeral, and that with seventy years on his back! And then he has all his brother's family to keep—seven persons! But you were only joking, Cavalier!—so never mind, let it pass. . . . And as for you, you blind rascal, I must speak to you again about this. You had no business to go masquerading in these clothes, which were given you in charity. To-morrow, I shall tell the chaplain to take them away from you again!"

"What a pity!" thought Doctor Phœbus to himself; "I was going to make the overcoat into a nice jacket to wear only on feast-days!"

"But, to make a short story of it," resumed the archdeacon after some moments of anxious silence, "what did you come here for—eh?"

"We came to see whether it is time for the *polpette*."

"The *polpette* are on the table; sit down, therefore, and eat."

"Fair and softly," exclaimed one of the guests a little later, giving Phœbus a tremendous nudge with his elbow.

"Blind man, you're going too fast!" cried the archdeacon, looking at him.

"May I lose my sight if I have eaten more than two!"

"Two!—you've eaten a dozen!"

“The blind man has a good appetite! Well, there’s no harm—his teeth will stand it!” said Modesta, who was seated close by, counting the mouthfuls.

“Well then, Modesta, my dear,” said Phœbus, “when his reverence says, ‘Modesta, give the blind man a piece of bread and some meat, poor fellow!’ why do you give me nothing but little dry crusts and cheese-parings? Do you take me for a mouse, Modesta?”

“Blind man, blind man, you are never satisfied!”

“Bless your reverence!” said Modesta, “it would take a great deal to satisfy him!”

“Nay, ’twould take little enough. I would be quite content if I had the sight of my eyes again.”

“Good luck to you!” exclaimed the syndic at last, after having for some time looked on in admiring silence at the process of mastication and deglutition. “The like of us would be dead in three days if they ate in that fashion!”

“Just try a little abstinence!” said Doctor Phœbus. “Try living all the year round on wild herbs and roots boiled without salt, or roasted in the ashes. That’s my prescription for you, sir!”

“Well, well,” said the syndic, “I would willingly exchange my life for yours. You have no expenses; you pay no taxes—do you think that a small thing? Now, I have to spend the very soul out of my body; a little for the cat and a little for the dog, and what remains for me? At the end of the year—so much received, so much spent, everything paid, and nothing over!”

“I should just like to take you by the neck and hold you down to our life for a month or so, so that you could try it!”

“Is that the way to speak to me?” said the syndic, somewhat offended. “You ought to be more respectful.”

“Oh! you must not think, my dear sir,” said the arch-deacon, “that the blind man is really wanting in respect

towards the authorities. Not at all! He may be a little quick-tempered now and then, but when he recollects himself he is a perfect lamb!"

"A kind of lamb which——" began the Franciscan.

"What do you expect?" interrupted Phœbus. "I used to be as sweet as sugar; but now I am a little spoilt with doing nothing. Now that I have tried it I find, in truth, that the labour of a porter is better than the idleness of a gentleman. Just set me to work in your factory, sir; let me turn the wheel, and give me thirty centimes a day, and you'll see how the blind man works!"

"Oh! indeed; you and your blarney!" retorted the syndic. "Look here, I would willingly help you, but I cannot. I shall have to shut up the works soon, to turn off every one, even my cook. Are they making game of us with these taxes? I don't know how we can go on; I haven't ten shillings left in the world. It is not my place as syndic to say so, but the fault certainly lies with the Government. . . ."

"Heigho!" said the blind man, "we shall be disappointed indeed, if we are putting our trust in you, Mr. Government!"

"You should put your trust in Providence, young man," said the preaching friar, "and come and hear my sermons!"

"Indeed and he shall come to the sermons, and be hanged to him!" exclaimed the archdeacon. "I'll give him a couple of eggs for every sermon; at Easter, so many sermons and so many eggs. But if you miss one sermon, you blind rascal, you shall get nothing at all!"

"Put it in writing, sir!"

"Why, you blind scoundrel, are you afraid of my dying first?"

"You, sir?—why, you'll live to the age of Noah on the clerical soups that Modesta makes for you! No; it's I that may die before Easter, and I should like to bequeath that little legacy of eggs to my family!"

“Come, come, Modesta ! never mind the blind man ; it’s time to clear the table. Don’t sit there keeping the brazier warm.”

“Sakes alive !” exclaimed Modesta, looking into the dish ; “there were sixty, and there are only eleven left !”

“I’m very sorry I didn’t eat them too !” replied Phœbus, “but I’ll come to breakfast after the sermon to-morrow and finish them !”

“Yes, come by all means ; they’ll just do for you !” said the archdeacon, giving a glance at the dish.

“Are they made of meat or potatoes ?” asked the Franciscan, with another great pinch of snuff.

“Of meat, of meat,” said Modesta testily.

“Yes, there’s just enough meat to swear by !” said Phœbus.

“Even though there were but a piece the size of a pin’s head,” said the friar as he took another pinch, “that would be enough ! To-morrow, you know, archdeacon, it’s a black vigil.”

“The friar is right ! Do you want to go to hell for eating *polpette* to-morrow ! Persicomele ! there’ll be no more *polpette* now till next year,—so good-bye, my fine fellow ! Modesta, light the syndic to the door. Don’t you see that he has put on his cloak, and wants to go ? Good-night, sir !”

“Good-night, archdeacon !” said the syndic, and then turned to whisper in his ear, “By-the-bye, the chaplain always stands up for all bad characters . . . and his niece . . .”

“Why, whatever has the chaplain done to you ? Modesta, light these other people out !”

“Never mind me, I can see in the dark !” replied Phœbus, going towards the door. “Modestina, dear, don’t you bother yourself with the light ; you’re using up too much oil ; you should be saving with it, Modestina !”

“What are you thinking of, poor blind man?—such a trifle as that!” cried Modesta. “Good gracious! we’re all of us baptised Christians, and a little light costs nothing.”

The blind man, in going out, closed the door with such a tremendous bang that he put out Modesta’s lamp; and returning to his disconsolate hut, wished two or three apoplexies to that meddling vagabond of a friar who had deprived him of those poor clothes and the remains of the supper, with which it was the archdeacon’s annual custom to reward the four poor wretches for their labours in the belfry. Having reached his house, he told his wife the good tidings of the eggs at Easter, and fell asleep in the time it takes to tell it. But that night he saw in his dreams neither flowers, nor cities, nor seas bright in the sunshine. He dreamed instead that he was the stout director of the manganese mines, and that he was sitting in a nicely-warmed room at a well-spread table, and just tasting the full flavour of a fat roast fowl. He was just at work on one of the legs when his wife began to turn him over and call him to get up. He struggled with his hands, feeling the director of the mines gradually disappear, and a moment later he became aware that he was only blind Phœbus. Then he hit himself a great thump on the head, and started up because he heard the bells ringing for sermon. When he had got into church he sat down close to the sacristy door, so that the archdeacon might be sure to see him. The preacher seemed to be flinging squalls of rain and wind, and all the devils of hell down from the pulpit on all the crowded, uncovered heads. Phœbus paid no attention to him. When he came out, certain good-for-nothing youngsters, loafing outside, shouted after him—

“Phœbus! Phœbus! what has the preacher been saying?”

“I don’t know!” he replied. “I was thinking of the eggs!”

“By Bacchus ! the archdeacon is quite right in thinking him a little cracked ! But I do believe that he would be a true believer if he saw the Divine Master’s teachings practised a little better, and also a little to his advantage !”

This was what the chaplain said to himself as he came out from the service, with displeasure still written on his face, and also a certain timid disgust, whether provoked by living men or by the dead, whom he was constantly obliged to see, I do not know.

*Mario Pratesi.*

### OUR SCHOOL AND SCHOOLMISTRESS.

WE used to go to school, Sofia and I, with a certain Signora Romola. They were very lavish with Greek and Roman names in our village in those days. Teofilo, Pompeo, Lucrezia, Collatino, Quintilia, were appellations frequently bestowed in baptism. Signora Romola was a strongly-built woman, plump and ruddy of face, and with a soft voice, too soft indeed for the air of severity which she wished to assume. It was her aim to strike awe into us with a glance. In fact we scarcely dared to breathe in her presence, by reason of that terrible glance which slowly swept the class, and she always used to say that it was quite sufficient. “I make them tremble with a glance,” she often told people ; and as soon as she made her majestic entrance into school there was immediate silence, a fact of which she was very proud. They used to say she had been a beauty in her youth ; I would not be persuaded of the truth of this statement. Her husband was Signor Capponio the chemist, who formed a complete contrast to her. He was a long, thin, thread-paper of a man, with a pair of great spectacles on his big nose, and sharp chin and cheek-bones which seemed to make a triangle in his



honest face. He always wore a buffalo-skin cap, with a peak curved like a bird's beak. I always imagined that he must have come into the world in that cap; I never saw him without it. He could play the flute, and often performed a tune for us boys during our play-hour, stamping vivaciously with one foot, and accompanying with his head, no less vivaciously, the motion of his fingers on the keys. We stood around him with our noses in the air, as though we had been gazing up at the top of a church tower, and held out our arms trying to seize the instrument, whose construction we were eager to examine; but, refusing to let go, he played on as vigorously as before—or even more so—and at last made his escape, saying, “You’ll spoil it! you’ll spoil it!” He had the name of a learned man; and he must, by what I have heard, have understood something of botany; but I think his reputation was really founded on certain sentences from Hippocrates and Galen, in Latin, written up in gilt letters over the shelves in his ancient shop. The gilding of the letters had turned black by reason of the flies which swarmed there, on which, in the summer, Capponio used to wage war—standing in the middle of his shop—by means of a stick with long strips of paper attached to it. I do not remember one of his many proverbs. He must have had a large stock of them, for it was often said, “As Capponio says, with his proverb! Eh!—honest man—*he* knows a lot about the world!” I used to think that the proverb was a person very much like Capponio himself—buffalo-skin cap and all—but still taller and more serious—appearing now here, now there—always unexpected, and at other times invisible.

Capponio was a great institution among us. Whenever we saw him we rushed up to him, dragging him by the skirts of his long, double-breasted, snuff-coloured coat. And then he would lift us up to let us see Lucca,<sup>1</sup> or show

<sup>1</sup> See Note 7 at end.

us how to turn somersaults. If, passing through the school-room, he saw one of us on his knees, with the fool's cap on his head, or his eyes blindfolded, he would try to make fun of his wife's austerities. She would sometimes inflict punishments even more humiliating than these—for instance, that most terrible one of all, of having to make crosses on the ground with one's tongue.

“Come, come no sorrow—

If you're not cured to-day, it will cure you to-morrow !”

Capponio used to say, in a nasal tone, to make the children cease crying and begin to laugh instead, which, in fact, they did; and Sora Romola, who claimed an infallible knowledge of “how to bring up young people,” grew uneasy and said that Capponio was getting us into very bad ways. But we were fonder of Capponio than ever, especially as he was always giving us something—a bunch of grapes, an orange, a pomegranate, or sticks of barley-sugar made by himself. I was particularly fond of these last. In fact, I once succeeded in perpetrating a crime which weighed heavily on my mind. One day I was not allowed to go home at twelve, but kept in to learn my lessons alone, in school. Tired of catching flies, I went down very softly into the shop while Capponio was at dinner. There was no one there but a big cat comfortably asleep on the counter, near the scales. I felt certain that the cat would not report my theft to any one, and very quickly, with my heart beating in a way that is not to be described, I filled my pockets with the delicious transparent morsels, and ate at least half a jar full, being determined, for once in my life, to have really as many as I wanted. But Capponio found it out; and, laying the blame on Camillo, the shop boy, ran after him and seized him by the ear, crying, “Ah! you greedy rascal! I've caught you!” When I saw the innocent accused I could hold out no longer, and, coming forward,

I blurted out, "It was I!" . . . I remembered standing there, very red, with my eyes on the ground, and expecting a sound box on the ear. But Capponio only said, "Will you promise me not to do it again?" "Yes, sir." "Mind you don't, then. This time I will forgive you, because you have told the truth; but if you ever do it again I shall tell Sora Romola, and then woe be to you!"

*Mario Pratesi.*

### *LOCAL JEALOUSIES.*

MEN, as well as women, speak ill of their neighbours; there is no denying that fact. But they can never do it as efficiently, and, in any case, they do not do it for the same reason. Men nearly always speak ill of others because they believe themselves greatly superior to those others; and if there is a race in the world, every individual of which believes that the phrase which calls man the lord of creation was made for his own personal use, that race is the Tuscan. Yesterday evening I was listening attentively to a dialogue between a Livornese and a Florentine seated at a table in the Giardino Meyeri. The conversation turned on the English nation.

"The English," said the Livornese, "are a selfish, heartless nation, who, if the world were on fire, would think that Providence had done it on purpose that they might heat the boilers of their steam-engines without expense!" "That is true," replied the other; "the French——" "Worse than ever!" interrupted the first; "a nation of barbers, of Robert Macaires, who took Nice and Savoy out of our pockets—yes, sir, out of our pockets, as a pickpocket does a handkerchief. The Spaniards—boastful, proud, vain, ignorant, bigoted, talkers. Come! speaking quite honestly, the Italians are the first people in the world, after all! It's true that the Piedmontese are a little hard, the Genoese too keen after

money, the Neapolitans superstitious, the Sicilians ferocious, and that the proverb says : ‘Beware of a red-haired Venetian, a black-haired Lombard, and any kind of a Romagnole!’ Every one must agree that Tuscany is the garden of Italy, as Italy is the garden of the world, and that the Tuscans, speaking without conceit, are the pearls of mankind !”

“The home of civilisation is in Tuscany,” he went on. “I have heard that said since my childhood, and always by Tuscans, who surely ought to know! Not that I would not admit that the Pistoians are all voice and pen, that the Aretines are excessively devout, not to say hypocrites, that the Siennese are vain, and the Pisans—why, Dante called them ‘the scorn of nations,’ and the Florentines—well! excuse me, a little given to loud talking and short of action . . . but the Livornese—ah! the Livornese are really the flower of the Tuscans! . . . And you may say what you please, but the finest street in Livorno is Via Vittorio Emmanuele, where I live. . . . I don’t know how any one can stay at Livorno and not have a house in that street. . . . It is good living there—at least, that is to say, on the left-hand side, because the sun never shines on the right, the houses are damp, and any one who takes one on that side is certainly an idiot. But on the left one can live like a prince; and among all the houses on that side there is not one like mine. I do not say that the other tenants are very first-rate people—oh dear no! . . . On the fourth floor there is an idiot, whose wife—well, never mind! on the third, a nobleman, with plenty of pride, but no money; on the second, a family all show and pretension, who spend their money right and left in order to look more than they really are, and who will assuredly come to ruin. On the ground floor there is a wretch—a turncoat, a crawling insect who has made money—no more of him! On the first floor I live with my family. My home, I may say, is a real para-

disc. . . . My father is dead—he was a gentleman!—a little hot-tempered if you like, a little obstinate; but no human being is without faults! . . . There is my mother, who is old—well, one knows, inclined to be querulous and tiresome; and my sister, who would be the best girl in Livorno if it were not for a touch of ambition, and a slight tendency to flirting; and then . . . there is myself. There! it is not for me to say—but you know me. I am quiet, peaceable, well educated; I am sincere; I know how to keep within my means; I am—well, in short, I am what I am!”

He might as well have said at once—“*I am the lord of creation!*”

*P. C. Ferrigni (“Yorick”).*

### SUNSHINE.

I DON'T say that the sun and I are great friends. I have too much respect for my courteous readers (including those who get their reading for nothing, by borrowing this book instead of buying it) to permit myself the slightest and most harmless of falsehoods where they are concerned. I am not a friend of the sun's, because I do not esteem him. That way he has of shining indiscriminately on all,—of working in partnership with everybody, from the photographer who forges bank-notes, to the laundress and the plasterer, seems to me to show a lamentable want of dignity in the Prime Minister of Nature. Besides, I remember that, many years ago, he was kept under arrest for twelve hours by a gendarme of antiquity, Captain Joshua, who must have had his reasons for taking so momentous a step.

Perhaps he was set at liberty again, because no grounds could be discovered for taking proceedings; but, at the same time, entirely respectable people do not, as a rule, get arrested for nothing!

However, the sun and I live so very far apart from one another, that I cannot say I see the necessity of breaking with him altogether. Every year, about the middle of spring, I take a run down to the Ardenza, stop on the sea-shore, pass respectfully in front of the villas and palaces of the neighbourhood, and return home with an easy conscience, and the feeling of having left my card at summer's door. So that, later in the season, when I meet the July sun, a sun which is quite Livornese, a municipal sun (the Corporation are extremely proud of it), we greet each other like old acquaintances! . . .

The July sun is a great benefactor to the Livornese. If gratitude were still the fashion, he ought to be made syndic of the city, and his painted image ought to figure on the municipal shield, instead of the present device of the two-towered fortress in the midst of the sea.

*P. C. Ferrigni.*

### WHEN IT RAINS.

SUPPOSE for a moment—and note, that when a man says *suppose*, he is perfectly sure of his ground, and woe be to any who contradicts him—suppose, then, for one moment, that man is really a rational animal.

The bizarre originality of being rational, which constitutes the *last term* of the definition, does not prejudice the wisely general character of the *first term*, which is this: Man is an animal.

Now, I ask, what use is reason to a man, if it does not make him take an umbrella when it rains? It is all very well for you to think yourself superior to all other created beasts,—to be proud of your learning, your science, your experience, your laws, your noble blood, or your ample income;—if you find yourself out in the rain without an

umbrella, you will always be the most contemptible figure in creation.

Let us be just;—humanity is not lovely when seen through the falling drops of rain, by the cold, dull light of a sunless day, under a dull, leaden, low, foggy sky, resting like a cover on the circle of the horizon. All men wear faces of portentous length; one can see that they bear an undying grudge against meteorologic science, on account of that phenomenon of aqueous infiltration which is so deadly to new hats and old boots. They go their ways dripping along the rows of houses, under the deluges from the water-pipes, picking their way between the puddles, with countenances cloudier than the skies, muttering the devil's litanies between their teeth with a muffled murmur like the gurgling of a boiling saucepan. At every corner, such accidents as making too close an acquaintance with the ribs of an umbrella coming the other way, getting splashed with liquid mud by a passing horse, or spoiling the freshness of a new pair of trousers by means of an overflowing gutter, provoke a glance which, if looks could kill, would be downright murder,—a contraction of the facial muscles which recalls the grin of the ancestral ape in a bad temper, and an explosion of *sotto voce* ejaculations, expressing a pious desire to see one's neighbours in general attached to the muzzle of a breech-loading mitrailleuse in full activity.

. . . Now, to orthodox minds there cannot be the slightest doubt on the subject; rain is by no means a fitting and necessary part of the order of things; it is rather of the nature of a judgment. The Scriptures make no mention of bad weather before the time of the Flood. Rain-water was in nowise needed for the development of germs or the ripening of the harvest. Adam had been condemned to water the earth with the sweat of his brow, and this irrigation would have been quite sufficient to raise maize and beans over the whole surface of the globe. . . .

From the preceding considerations it seems to me that one can draw two principal conclusions:—

1. That rain is not a necessity of Nature, but rather what is commonly called a judgment of Providence.

2. That human beings, when it rains, are exceedingly ugly.

Take these two conclusions and put them aside; for we may draw from them later on the most curious and unexpected consequences. . . .

*P. C. Ferrigni.*

### THE PATENT ADAPTABLE SONNET.

FROM "IL SIGNOR LORENZO."

. . . *Gianni.* I have three systems of making money; one is that of the poet. Suppose, for example, there is a wedding, a young man who has just taken his degree, a dancer who has been a great success, a celebrated preacher, a new member of the Chamber of Deputies,—I have a sonnet which will do for any of them; it only wants the last three lines varied to suit the occasion. I have six alternative versions of those three lines. It is a revolver-sonnet; you can fire six shots with it. Do you see? The two quartets consist of philosophical observations on the joys and sorrows of life; they will do for every one. In the first tercet I descend from the general to the particular. "O thou!" I say without further appellation. That *thou* has neither sex nor age; it is equally suitable for man or woman, old or young, noble or bourgeois. (Begins to recite, gesticulating.)

And thou, into whose heart high Heaven all pure  
Virtues did gather, and a noble need  
Did grant of soothing woes that men endure.

You see that is adapted to all, and the point of the whole is



the idea of *soothing the woes that men endure*. Now the last tercet is, so to speak, the loaded cartridge in the revolver. Suppose I am addressing a bride—

Enjoy, O fair and gentle Bride, the crown  
Due to all generous souls elect indeed ;  
May Heaven to-day send thee this guerdon down.

Or else, for a graduate—

Enjoy, O gentle scholar, thou the crown  
Due to all generous souls elect indeed ;  
May Science send to-day this guerdon down !

Or, “Enjoy, O gentle artist ;” or, again, “Enjoy, O offspring of a royal race ;” or, “O, industrious plebeian ;” “O sacred order”—according to circumstances.

*Gertrude*. And supposing there were a death in the family ?

*Gianni*. Ah ! certainly ! There I should say, “Enjoy, O gentle heir !”

*Gertrude*. It is an ingenious idea.

*Paolo Ferrari*.

••

### LOVE BY PROXY.

*Petronio*. . . . I tell you I’m tired of it ! And it is you I complain of—you and your apathy, which poor Virginia thinks she can cure by means of the stimulus of jealousy ! And I am to act the part of stimulus ! But it is a part I don’t at all relish, because when you come to look into it, the stimulus, instead of acting on you, acts on me ! In other words, I am falling in love—do you understand that ? I am falling in love with your Virginia, my Carlo ! I am becoming your rival, my good friend !—and a neglected rival, by all that’s contemptible ! Because I am your friend I speak of nothing but you when I am with her ;—she

accuses, and I defend you—you idiot! She doubts you, and I keep on swearing that you adore her—blind fool! . . . And all this is very dangerous to my virtue. For, while it is quite true that I speak on your account, I feel my ears burning on my own. It is true that Virginia is touched by my words, because I, lying most vilely, keep telling her that they are yours. But I know well enough that they are my own words; therefore, is the look that flashes from those great eyes of hers, as she listens to them, mine or yours? I can't tell, and the effort to find out causes such a confusion of emotions—mine, thine, his, ours, yours, everybody's . . .—that my head spins round faster than Angiolina's reel. There, you have it now!

*P. Ferrari.*

## A WET NIGHT IN THE COUNTRY.

LUISA, and LAURETTA, *her maid, packing up trunks.*

•• *Lauretta.* Here—this trunk is locked, and now we are all ready.

*Luisa.* Oh! I hear my husband's voice.

*Giuliano (behind the scenes).* Yes, yes—don't worry yourselves; I will be punctual.

*A Voice (ditto).* Yes—and your wife too; don't forget!

*Other Voices.* Yes, of course, your wife must come with you.

*Giu.* Yes, yes. Then it is understood—— Good-bye for the present. (*Enter Giuliano.*) Good evening, dear. (*Lays aside his gun.*) Here I am, back again. (*Looking round.*) Oh! good—the trunks are all ready, and the smaller boxes have followed their laudable example! . . . Everything is in order! . . . Law and order for ever!

*Luisa.* And you're as mad as ever! Are you tired?

*Giu.* According to your own rule—which holds good under any circumstances—I never get tired. And to prove it to you—there is to be dancing this evening.

*Luisa and Lauretta (astonished).* Dancing this evening!

*Giu.* Dancing.

*Luisa.* But you don't think——?

*Giu.* I never think—another general rule. Yes, I repeat, there is to be dancing, and, what is better, you will dance too.

*Luisa.* I, indeed!

*Giu.* Oh, yes! you shall dance, dear;—you shall come with your husband to the party we have got up on the spur of the moment—you will be lovely—adorable! Oh! don't say no—I beg you—I entreat you. As a friend, I entreat you . . . (*Unbuttoning his coat.*) As a husband, I command you.

*Luisa (laughing as if in spite of herself).* You are a queer creature!

*Giu.* Ah! you laugh?

*Luisa.* I may laugh; but you must not think I am going to give way.

*Giu.* Then there is nothing for it but a story? the resource of old-fashioned comedies. Well, listen now, and you shall have your story. . . This is how it happened. Coming back from shooting, as we drew near the village, we began to debate how we might spend the remaining hours of this evening, up to the time of our departure, most agreeably. We stopped in a meadow to form a club and discuss matters. As usually happens in clubs, much learned nonsense was talked and many absurd measures proposed. . . . At last some one suggested getting up an extempore dance. The motion was negatived by the mayor and his secretary, whose figures are obviously incompatible with any kind of gymnastic exercise—except perhaps that to be obtained on a see-saw. It was then that I carried my *coup*

*d'état*; we were all seated, look you, so I took in the situation at a glance, and exclaimed, "The motion is put to the vote. Those against it will kindly rise; those in favour of it will remain seated." Our two Falstaffs exchanged a look full of anguish, and seeing that they could not record a negative vote without the frightful exertion of rising from the ground, preferred to affirm by remaining as they were. The resolution was therefore passed by acclamation, and the dance is to begin immediately in the drawing-room of the Manfredi Palace, not far from this house.

*Luisa.* And what results from all this? That *we* are going to this dance?—we, who have to start at daybreak! Do think of it, Giuliano—the thing is impossible!

*Giu.* How impossible?

*Luisa.* Don't you see? all my dresses are already packed in this trunk; the tulle, the ribbons, and flowers in that box; the gold ornaments locked up in my jewel-case. . . . I should have to open everything, turn everything upside down; and the coachman may come any moment to fetch the things. . . . No, no—it's absolutely impossible!

*Giu.* Hm!—well, if there's no help for it—if it is to cause so much inconvenience. . . . Well—sometimes it is as well to be reasonable. . . .

*Luisa.* Come now, that's right.

*Giu.* Well—I'll make this sacrifice.

*Luisa.* Yes, for my sake, well done!

*Giu.* Yes, for your sake, I'll try to put up with it. . . . I'll go alone.

*Lau. (aside, laughing).* Oh! I didn't expect *that*.

*Luisa (astonished).* What! you're *going*?

*Giu.* Oh! certainly!

*Luisa.* But, my gracious! your clothes are all packed up!

*Giu.* They can be unpacked, I suppose.

*Luisa.* But the trunks are locked.

*Giu.* They can be opened.

*Luisa.* But do you, or don't you, understand that the cabman may call for them any moment?

*Giu.* Send him to the devil! I'll take that much on myself.

*Luisa.* Oh! I tell you what, this is mere childishness, and I am not going to be the victim of all your whims and fancies! Now that I've nearly killed myself getting things straight, packing and getting ready and all, . . . and I'm to upset everything again. I tell you I just won't do it! I don't feel fit for it, and I tell you I'm not going to open a single trunk,—so there! (*Walks up and down.*)

*Giu.* You're not going to undo anything?

*Luisa.* I'm not.

*Giu.* Quite sure?

*Luisa.* Absolutely.

*Giu.* Then I will. (*Opens a trunk.*)

*Lau.* (*aside*). It's all up now!

*Luisa* (*quickly*). Don't—don't! you're turning everything upside down.

*Giu.* Either you or I.

*Luisa.* Do make an end of it! . . . There!—there's no help for it—what can one do with a lunatic? Get out of the way, do! What is it you want?

*Giu.* Not much—shirt, socks, white waistcoat, black neck-tie, dress coat, gloves, crush-hat, handkerchief, breast-pin, Eau-de-Cologne—nothing else!

*Luisa.* Mercy on us! Oh! poor me!

*Giu.* Ah! and my boots.

*Luisa.* Anything else? Lauretta, where are the boots? Do come and help me here!

*Lau.* They're in the green trunk in the other room!

*Giu.* Francesco! (*Enter Francesco.*) Go into the other room at once, and look if there is a pair of patent leather boots in the green trunk. (*Exit Francesco.*) Ah! by Jove! I knew I had forgotten something!

*Luisa.* Oh! good gracious! what else?

*Giu.* Why, of course, my other pair of trousers.

*Luisa.* Why, they're right at the bottom of the box.

*Giu.* Oh, indeed! You don't expect me to go in these, do you? (*Enter Francesco without the boots.*) Well—about those boots?

*Fran.* They are there.

*Giu.* Well, what have you done with them?

*Fran.* They're in the green trunk.

*Giu.* Haven't you brought them?

*Fran.* You told me to look if they were there, sir; you didn't say I was to bring them.

*Giu.* I must say you're wonderfully intelligent for your age. (*With ironical amiability.*) Go back again, my dearest boy, open the trunk, take out that pair of varnished boots. . . . Do you know, by-the-bye, what varnished means? It means that they have never been blacked by you. . . . A new pair that has not been worn yet. . . . Take them in your hands, and bring them here to me.

*Fran.* Am I to bring in the trunk as well, sir?

•• *Giu.* Tell me now, what did your mother say when she saw you were such an idiot?

*Fran.* She said nothing, sir; she cried.

*Giu.* Very good! Well, you can leave the trunk in the other room. (*Walking up and down, while Luisa and Lauretta are unpacking, and talking as if to himself.*) Oh! I'm not at all sorry to go out by myself for once in a way. . . . After two years of marriage . . .

*Lau.* (*aside to Luisa*). Mistress, if I were you, I wouldn't let him go by himself.

*Luisa.* Oh! he's only joking . . . My dear girl, if I had not to turn so many things out. . . .

*Giu.* Let me see . . . to whom should I devote my attention more particularly? . . . Decidedly there is no one but the doctor's wife. . . .

*Luisa (aside to Lauretta).* Where did you put my light blue gauze dress?

*Lau. (aside).* In the other trunk, on the top.

*Giu. (as before).* Yes, yes; that's it . . . the doctor's wife. . . . After the dance I will see her home.

*Luisa (aside to Lauretta).* Just open the other trunk and take out my blue dress. (*Aloud, to Giuliano.*) Just listen, Giuliano, I have been thinking it over, and . . . I think I'll come too.

*Giu.* But just think, dear; you'll have to turn everything upside down and undo all the boxes you have packed.

*Luisa.* Never mind.

*Giu.* Then, you see, you have your dresses in this trunk, your tulle and flowers and lace in that box, your jewellery——

*Luisa.* Do stop, you wretch! You want to have your revenge on me; but it won't do. I tell you I don't mind; I'll turn out everything and come . . . that is, *if you want me!*

*Giu.* Want you? How can you doubt it? But you'll have to be quick.

*Luisa (running to Lauretta).* Oh! I'll be ready directly, never fear. Quick, Lauretta; just throw the things anywhere; never mind where, as long as you can get at my dress.

*Giu.* Let us be clear about things, dear wife. Directly is a relative term, and when it relates to a lady's toilet it is difficult to find a fixed standard by which one can judge. Well then—(*watch in hand*)—how much time will you require?

*Luisa.* Oh! just think of it! A quarter of an hour—half-an-hour at most. . . . I'm sure I shall not take three-quarters . . . or at any rate only a very little more.

*Giu.* Ah! ah! you're just like Goldoni's lawyer. Well, try to make an effort, at any rate!

*Luisa.* Oh! don't be afraid; I won't be a minute.

*Giu.* I tell you what I'll do: while you're dressing I'm going to throw myself on the bed to rest a little. . . . So when you are ready, just tell me. . . . I shall not be a minute dressing. (*Exit, but goes on speaking behind the scenes.*) Mind, I want you to look your best. What dress are you going to put on?

*Luisa.* The blue gauze.

*Giu.* All right.

*Fran.* (*returning with the boots*). Where's the master?

*Lau.* In the bedroom. (*Exit Francesco.*)

*Fran.* (*behind the scenes*). Sir!

*Giu.* (*in a sleepy voice*). Let me alone.

*Fran.* The boots are here, sir.

*Giu.* Go away with you.

*Fran.* But you told me . . . (*Comes out on the stage, followed by a pillow thrown by Giuliano. Mutters to himself:*) After all, the proverb is right, "Let sleeping dogs lie."

*Luisa.* Really, in this house we are not likely to die of melancholy. Come, Lauretta, and help me to get my dress on.

(*Exeunt Luisa and Lauretta.*)

*Fran.* As I've nothing to do, I might as well go to my room and sleep a little. By Jove! I think it's raining. (*Goes to look out of window.*) Yes, indeed, that's good! I wonder how the mistress will manage to go to that dance.

*Luisa* (*within*). Francesco!

*Fran.* Yes, ma'am.

*Luisa.* Is it raining?

*Fran.* I'm afraid so. . . . If you'll allow me, ma'am, I'll go away to my room; you can give a call whenever you want me.

*Luisa.* Yes, yes, you may go. (*Exit Francesco.*)

. . . . .



(*Enter Cavallotto.*)

*Cav.* What's this? Everything was ready, and now . . . Body o' the morning! what does all this mean?

*Luisa* (*within, Lauletta*). My good man, we are going to a dance.

*Cav.* And when will you start?

*Luisa.* We shall start later.

*Cav.* But that does not suit me at all, ma'am! Do you know that we have forty miles to go? And I don't want to find myself on the road after dark.

*Giuliano* (*within, awaking*). What's the matter there?

*Luisa.* Oh! that will be all right. Giuliano, would you mind speaking to Cavallotto?

*Giu.* (*as before*). Ah! Cavallotto, is it you? What do you want? We'll start later. . . .

*Cav.* But, I repeat, by all the——

*Giu.* (*half asleep*). Don't bother me now. . . . I'll pay you extra. . . . We'll make two days' journey of it. . . . Anything you like, as long as you go away now.

*Cav.* Ah! if you're willing to stop half-way, I have no more to say; on the contrary, I am glad of it, because one of my horses has a pain——

*Giu.* Ah! you scoundrel! (*Exit Cavallotto, shrugging his shoulders.*) And if we wanted to leave at six, how would you get out of the difficulty? . . . Answer! . . . Ah! you are dumb! Let us see now . . . how . . . because we shall have to . . . Yes, certainly! (*Falls asleep.*)

(*Enter Luisa, in evening dress, arranging her ornaments.*)

*Luisa.* My good Cavallotto——! Why! he's gone. So much the better. Now I must call Giuliano, and find out what he means to do if it rains.

*Lau.* After all, it is only a few steps to the Manfredi Palace.

*Luisa.* That is true ; but at any rate it is time to call him, Giuliano !

*Giu. (within).* What is it ?

*Luisa.* It's time to get up.

*Giu.* What a bother ! I was sleeping so comfortably.

*Luisa.* Come, be quick !

*Giu.* Tell me, Luisa, have you really set your heart on going to this tiresome dance ?

*Luisa.* Oh, indeed ! if you're not enough to provoke a saint !

*Giu.* Calm yourself, my dear ; I'm coming. (*Enters in his dressing-gown. He sits down near the front of the stage.*) See here ; while I was in there on the bed, my dear girl, I was reflecting seriously——

*Luisa.* Do tell the truth, and say you were sleeping deliciously !

*Giu.* That may be, but even in sleep the mind continues its intellectual processes, and, as I said, I thought over your judicious observations. . . .

*Luisa (vexed).* Really, this is too much ! First you nearly drive me out of my senses, till I made up my mind to come with you to the dance ; then, when I have turned out all my boxes, and taken the trouble to dress, and am all but ready, you want . . . *Will* you be kind enough not to carry the joke too far ?

*Giu.* Enough ! let us perform this heroic action ! Francesco !

*Fran. (within).* Sir ?

*Giu.* Come here directly. (*Enter Francesco.*) Take my things and come and help me to dress. (*Exit into his bedroom, followed by Francesco.*)

*Luisa.* Oh ! these men ! these men ! all tyrants and bullies—even the best of them ! Come ! where are my bracelets ?

*Lau.* This time it went off all right, though !

*Luisa.* Oh! it's not ended yet. . . . If you only knew . . . I am terribly afraid.

*Lau.* What about?

*Luisa.* I am afraid I have given Giuliano the wrong pair of trousers . . . those that did not fit, and made him so angry. . . .

*Lau.* Those that he threw at the tailor's head after the first time of trying them on?

*Luisa.* Yes, those . . .

*Giu. (from within).* Luisa!

*Luisa (aside to Lauretta).* Ah! didn't I say so? (*Aloud.*) What is it?

*Giu.* Which trousers have you given me?

*Luisa.* I . . . I don't know . . .

*Giu.* They are those that ass of a tailor made. . . . I kept them out of charity, but I never meant to wear them . . . never!

*Luisa.* Oh! they can't be those.

(*Enter Giuliano from the bedroom.*)

*Giu.* Can't they? I tell you it is the very pair. . . .

*Luisa.* But do be persuaded. . . .

*Giu.* Persuaded, indeed! Why, of course they are the same; and if you don't give me another pair I shall not come.

*Luisa.* And I tell you that I don't feel the least bit inclined to pull all the things out of another trunk. . . . It's nothing but excuses to make me stay at home. But anyway——

*Giu.* Oh, heavens! another sermon! No, no—do be quiet. I'll resign myself, and try to endure. . . . Francesco, my boots! (*He puts them on at the back of the stage, turning his back on the audience.*) Gracious, how tight they are! . . . curses on that shoemaker! How am I to hold out with my feet in these? (*Rises and walks about stiffly and clumsily.*)

*Luisa.* Another excuse!

*Giu.* Excuse! I tell you it feels as though I had my feet in a vice. I can't move.

*Luisa.* After all, you're not going to play at tennis.

*Giu.* Well, and what then? If a gentleman does not feel disposed to take part in the noble game of tennis, is he to be laced up so that he cannot move?

*Luisa (angrily).* In short—I understand! Do you wish to stay at home? Does it bore you to come to the dance? Do you want to go to bed? We will stay at home—we will not go to the dance—we *will* go to bed!

*Giu.* Mind that I do not take you at your word.

*Luisa.* Much it matters to me if you do! Come, Laretta, help me off with these things!

*Giu.* Francesco, get these boots off for me! (*Exit.*)

(*Luisa sits down R., with signs of vexation, and Laretta begins to undo her head-dress.*)

*Fran. (following Giuliano).* I am really beginning to get tired of this business.

*Luisa (rises and walks to the door of Giuliano's room, Laurette following her and taking off her ornaments as she goes).* I tell you all the same, sir, that this is not the way to treat me; and if you play me this sort of trick again, I know very well what I shall do. (*Returns to the front of the stage, and sits down, still followed by Laretta.*)

(*Enter Giuliano, followed by Francesco.*)

*Giu.* And what, if you please, do you want to do? This is very fine indeed! Is it my fault if my clothes and boots are too tight? Am I to be condemned to walk about like a wooden doll—like an elephant—for a whole night, to please you? Your pretensions are truly wonderful! (*Exit.*)

*Marco (behind the scenes).* Is Giuliano here? May I come in?

*Luisa.* Come in.

*(Enter Marco, with an umbrella, in a black dress-coat.)*

*Marco.* Madam——

*(Enter Giuliano, in dressing-gown and slippers.)*

*Giu.* Marco, my dear fellow, are you looking for me?

*Marco.* Precisely.

*Luisa.* With your permission. . . . *(Exit, with Lauretta.)*

*Marco.* Well done! you are just dressing.

*Giu.* Just so—we were just dressing. What's the news?

*Mar.* The news is, that it is raining, and in this weather none of the ladies will be coming to our improvised party. We therefore thought of sending a carriage for them.

*Giu.* Well?

*Mar.* It's not so well. A carriage is not so easily found in our village.

*Giu.* I understand. If it were a cart, now . . .

*Mar.* We found one, however; a fine, commodious coach, to hold six people——

*Giu.* An ark, in short—just the thing for this threatened universal deluge. Well, what then?

*Mar.* The worst is, we cannot get——

*Giu.* The horses?

*Mar.* Precisely. The owner sold them last week, to buy——

*Giu.* Hay?

*Mar.* No, to buy a yoke of oxen.

*Giu.* Well, why don't you harness the oxen?

*Mar.* Just like you—you must have your joke. Listen, now—this is what we thought of doing. There are two cab-drivers in the place; we have made arrangements with them to fetch the ladies in their cabs.

*Giu.* Very good.

*Mar.* So I have come to give you notice that in a little while they will be coming round for your wife and you—so try to be ready.

*Giu.* But really . . .

*Mar.* Oh! there is no "really" that will hold. If you don't come in the cab, we'll come to fetch you with a stick.

*Giu.* No—not that. Bruises for bruises, I prefer those of the cab. I'll come.

*Mar.* With your wife, mind!

*Giu.* With my wife.

*Mar.* Good-bye till then. (*Exit.*)

*Giu.* Good-bye.

(*Enter Luisa, still in evening dress, followed by Lauretta.*)

*Giu.* So, you understand that you absolutely must go!

*Luisa.* And be quick about it. (*Laughing.*)

*Giu.* Francesco!

*Fran.* Here I am.

*Giu.* Quick, I want to dress! (*Exit.*)

*Fran.* (*aside*). Now, I am most decidedly disgusted!  
(*Exit.*)

*Giu.* (*within*). Luisa, pity me! I am putting my feet back into the vice!

*Luisa.* For so sweet a cause one can suffer anything!

*Giu.* (*within*). Ah! . . . May you be bitten by a mad dog!

*Luisa.* What's the matter?

*Giu.* That idiot of a Francesco has just tenderly trodden on my foot with one of his iron-heeled boots.

*Fran.* (*within*). I beg your pardon, sir; but would you please reflect that it was you who put your foot under my heel?

*Giu.* And hurt your heel, eh?

*Lau.* (*laughing*). I think, ma'am, the scenes that take place in this house, especially this evening . . . I must say it is a pity people can't see them in the theatre!

(*Enter Giuliano in his shirt sleeves, followed by Francesco.*)

*Giu.* Here I am; where's my necktie? (*Francesco hands*

*it to him, and he puts it on. Luisa looks on, laughing.)* You laugh, eh?—unhappy woman! You laugh because you cannot take in at a glance the seriousness of your husband's position! . . . My waistcoat! (*Francesco hands it.*) For one has to calculate all chances . . . the chance of a declaration, for instance!

*Luisa.* What business have you making declarations, sir?

*Giu.* I have no business whatever to make any; but I might do so—go on my knees, and all—and then . . . My dress-coat! (*Francesco hands it, as before.*) . . . Give me a pin for my necktie. (*Luisa brings him one.*) Do me the favour to put it in for me, will you? But mind you don't make a hole in me—see?

*Luisa.* Now, let the cab come when it likes—we are all ready!

*Giu.* Yes; the victim is prepared for the sacrifice! Just imagine it! My feet are so numb and dead I might be a Chinese—a remnant of the Russian army—a survivor of the Beresina! And then to have to walk upstairs in these same boots, and finish up by dancing a mazurka with the mayor's daughter!

(*Enter Marco.*)

*Mar.* May I come in?

*Giu.* Oh! it's you? Here we are, quite ready!

(*Luisa puts on her shawl and hood, helped by Lauretta.*

*Giuliano takes his hat and gloves.*)

*Mar.* I came myself, because——

*Giu.* Thanks for the trouble, my dear fellow. Come along, Luisa. (*Gives her his arm.*)

*Mar.* But—one moment!

*Luisa.* What is it?

*Mar.* I am truly grieved. . . . But I must . . .

*Giu.* But what is it all about?

*Mar.* One of the two cabmen we were counting on is away, . . . and the other . . .

*Luisa.* That is our Cavallotto ; he is here, surely ?

*Mar.* But one of his horses is ill, and cannot be harnessed. The rain continues to come down in torrents ; and as we saw there was no help for it, we determined to give up the idea of the dance, and have one instead when you come again.

*Luisa.* The dance, then . . .

*Giu.* There is none ?

*Mar.* There is none. I came to make my apologies to you, madam ; and now I must run off home to change my clothes, for I am as wet as a drowned chicken. Madam—Giuliano, old fellow, I wish you good-night and a pleasant journey. (*Exit.*)

(*Giuliano and Luisa stand, arm in arm, looking at one another comically.*)

*Lauretta (aside to Francesco).* Go and tell the cook to bring up supper.

*Francesco.* A good idea. (*Exit.*)

*Giu. (looking round).* A magnificent room, isn't it ?

*Luisa (who has laid aside her wraps, imitating him).* Splendidly illuminated.

*Giu.* Ladies in great numbers.

*Luisa.* Plenty of gentlemen.

*Giu. (looking at Luisa).* See, see, how gracious my wife is to the mayor !

*Luisa (looking at Giuliano).* Look at my husband doing the polite to the doctor's wife !

*Giu.* Madam, will you kindly favour me with this polka ?

*Luisa.* With all the pleasure in the world, sir.

*Giu. (to Lauretta and Francesco, who are standing at the back of the stage laughing).* Orchestra !—polka !

(*Lauretta sings a polka, Francesco taking the bass. Giuliano and Luisa take a few steps together.*)



*(Enter the Cook, in white cap and apron.)*

*Cook.* The supper is served.

*Giu.* Now, shall we go to supper? *(Exeunt.)*

*(Curtain.)*

*Paolo Ferrari*

## *A LOST EXPLORER.*

FROM THE COMEDY "CORVI" (CARRION CROWS).

**B**ERTRANDO, the editor of the *Demos*, and Serpilli, the publisher, have just received word of the death of their friend Arganti, who had gone on an exploring expedition into the Soudan.

*Bertrando.* I have just sent the confirmation of the sad news. Poor Arganti! This sudden loss has quite paralysed me. It is all very well to make a parade of one's want of feeling and pretend to be a cynic; but when the thunderbolt falls at your very feet . . .

*Serpilli.* Just so; but, *I* say, what mad notion was it that made him go and get himself killed out there? At fifty, too! Were there not enough hare-brained young fellows eager to discover new outlets, new resources for commerce, for industry, for African humanity, which, by-the-bye, loves us as well as people love the smoke in their eyes? . . . Wasn't he quite comfortable here, in this charming house, with the best of wives? No, sir! He must needs be off poking his nose into other people's affairs!

*Ber.* You forget how many years he had travelled—and the love of science——

*Ser.* One might get over it if the misfortune had been confined to the dead, but it also touches the living!

*Ber.* Serpilli!

*Ser.* My dear fellow, it's all very well for you to talk; but

I have undertaken a complete illustrated edition of all his travels. . . . Sixty thousand francs, do you understand? I am ruined!

*Ber.* Do you think this is the time——?

*Ser.* Yes, yes, certainly—I mourn for him—I am deeply grieved; but who will give me back my sixty thousand francs? It's ruin—it's bankruptcy! . . . Oh! who would have thought it? And it must happen to me, of all men in the world!

*Ber.* Come, have done with this! Who prevents your continuing the issue? Surely Arganti's writings have not lost their value through his death?

*Ser.* What interest can attach to his expedition to Palestine, undertaken twenty years ago, now that people can make a holiday excursion of it and travel by rail? It needs something else to tickle the palate of the public, who, nowadays, are perfectly familiar with Afghanistan, Zululand, Basutoland,—not to mention journeys to the centre of the earth, to the bottom of the sea, and the sphere of the moon! My poor sixty thousand francs! . . . If he had lived it would not have been so bad. With a Mutual Admiration Society such as the fashionable papers know how to get up, something might have been done. But now that Arganti is dead, who is going to waste his time in praising him? You will have your time fully taken up in bringing out some new genius—one of those startling and powerful ones who open new horizons to the heart and mind, to science, and their country every quarter of an hour! And I shall be sacrificed!

*Ber.* You are both ungrateful and mistaken. You have made quite a nice little sum out of our poor friend's works, which we advertised for you at reduced prices and reviewed in special articles!

*Ser.* Why, I have spent the whole on advertising the new edition; and now, just as I am about to reap the fruits of

judicious puffing, everything is upset by death—the one thing I had not calculated on.

*Ber.* Serpilli! Serpilli!

*Ser.* It is enough to bring on an attack of the jaundice! If Arganti had at least confined himself to writing a couple of volumes! . . . No, sir! Twenty-seven!

*Ber.* Would you, out of sordid self-interest, wish the scientific and literary heritage of the nation to be diminished?

*Ser.* You are laughing at me. You are quite right; I have been an idiot.

*Ber.* I respect every one's convictions.

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*Serpilli, Bertrando, Geronte (an embalmer). Enter  
Francesco.*

*Francesco.* The telegraph messenger has just brought these six telegrams.

*Ser.* Give them to me.

*(Francesco gives them, and exit.)*

*Ser. (opening the telegrams and reading).* The Independent Liberal Democratic Association—the syndic—the Association of Watchmakers' Apprentices—the tribunal—the prefect . . . "Unspeakable grief"—"sorrow of the human race"—"words fail" . . . *(Throws the telegrams on the table.)* "In great misfortunes vibrates the heart of great nations." . . .

*Per. (enters hurriedly).* And of all great artists.

*Ger.* The sculptor Peralti, a dear friend, one of our associates.

*Ser. (to Peralti).* Have you heard, too?

*Per.* I have read some twenty or thirty telegrams posted up at the street corners, and have at once hastened here to present to the widow this design for a monument to be erected to her husband.

*Ser.* Did you have it ready?

*Per.* An artist never lets himself be taken unawares.

*Ger.* You have the instinct of genius!

*Per.* (*unrolling a sheet of paper which he holds in his hand, and giving it to Geronte*). You see, a large pedestal with three steps—two sleeping lions, in Canova's manner—a cubic block of granite, which has a philosophic signification. The statue is seated on a curule chair. . . . Just look at the subtlety, the diapason, the *tonality*, the depth of the *tout ensemble*!

*Ser.* But surely this is the drawing you made for Professor Giulini.

*Ger.* (*handing the paper to Serpilli*). I thought I had seen it exhibited as a design for a monument to General Quebrantador.

*Ser.* (*handing it to Peralti*). Not at all. I tell you——

*Ger.* And I maintain——

*Per.* Calm yourselves, gentlemen. The artist of any *élan* dashes off his idea just as genius inspires him. . . . It will then serve its purpose when a purpose is made apparent.  
(*Rolls up the drawing.*)

*Ger.* Bravo! I hold exactly the same theory with regard to my own science. I prepare the acids . . .

(*Enter Francesco.*)

*Fran.* What is all this, Signor Serpilli? Just look, what a bundle of telegrams!

*Ser.* Excellent! Go and tell Signor Bertrando.

*Fran.* (*lays the telegrams on the table*). Oh! by-the-bye, I was forgetting. . . . What has become of my head? . . . There is a photographer outside who will insist on seeing the mistress.

*Ser.* Show him in. (*Exit Francesco.*)

*Per.* Only give me 50,000 francs, and Arganti shall have the most characteristic monument of the age!

*(Enter Photographer, with his camera.)*

*Ser.* What do you want, sir?

*Pho.* I saw all the telegrams posted up. Every one was in a state of consternation, asking who Arganti was. . . . Having made inquiries on the subject, I hastened hither with my camera, and would now request the favour of taking a photograph of the illustrious Arganti's portrait. . . . Begging your pardon, what was his christian name?

*Ser.* Ettore.

*Pho.* . . . Poor Ettore's portrait. I will guarantee a work of art that shall be a tremendous success! I am also going to take photographs of his bedroom, his study, his inkstand, the front of the house—everything!—and to advertise them in all the papers.

*Ser.* *(shaking him by the hand)*. I thank you in the name of the family. To honour the noble dead is not only a work of merit—it is a duty: a duty which we are here to carry out.

*Ger.* I alone can do nothing. . . . Ah! Signor Serpilli!

*Ser.* Since common feelings of delicacy have assembled us in this spot, let us take steps for transferring to the public the conviction of the greatness of our loss. *(Rings the bell.)*

*Pho.* Poor Ettore!

*Per.* Poor, dear fellow!

*Ger.* My poor friend!

*Ser.* Well. . . . *(After a pause, rubbing his hands.)* We are all mortal.

*C. Lotti.*

*THE SPIRIT OF CONTRADICTION.*

*Pandolfo.* It is not to be tolerated! They do it on purpose to drive me out of my senses!

*Paolo Galanti.* Who has made you angry, Signor Pandolfo?

*Pan.* Who? Does any one ask? My wife and daughter—— What! whom do I see? You, Benini!

*Ben.* So you recognised me at once? I thought you had forgotten me altogether.

*Pan.* No, sir, I had not forgotten you. Am I a man to forget old friends? . . . For we certainly are old friends.

*(They shake hands cordially.)*

*Ben.* We are, indeed! Twenty years——

*Pan.* No, not twenty years; eighteen or nineteen. . . . We used to see a great deal of each other—do you remember?

*Ben.* Don't I?

*Pan.* We often used to dispute; because you are of a most contradictory temper.

*Ben.* I?

*Pan.* Would you deny it?

*Ben.* Well, no—I was young and impetuous in those days, and had not much sense—or indeed none at all.

*Pan.* That is not the case—you were not altogether without sense. . . . It is true you had your little eccentricities—but, after all . . .

*Ben.* And you never paid the slightest attention to my words. . . .

*Pan.* That is not true! I always attended to you—I always had the greatest consideration for you, I assure you; and it gives me more pleasure than I can express to find you here again.

*(They shake hands again.)*

*Pao. (aside to Benini).* My word! I have never yet seen him receive any one so well!

*Pan.* You must come to see my wife.

*Ben.* I do not know whether Signora Angelica will be disposed to welcome me after all these years.

*Pan.* Of course she will! I'll answer for that! Why—an intimate friend of mine! Yet she does everything she possibly can to contradict and oppose me, that woman!—She has not a bad disposition—I would not say that; but it is a certain perversity of humour. Just imagine that, at this very moment, when all the visitors present in the place are going to assemble in these rooms, she could find no better way of spending her time than in going off for a long walk on the beach. Never lets herself be seen—persists in withdrawing from society—mere madness, I call it! . . . We have a daughter, and if this sort of thing goes on, how shall we ever get her settled in life?

*Pao.* Oh! as to that, the young lady cannot fail to find——

*Pan.* What! are you, too, going to contradict me?

*Pao.* No, most certainly not! Only, since the ladies are going out, if you will permit me, I should like to accompany them for part of the way.

*Pan.* Hm!

*Pao.* I will just go and fetch my hat and umbrella.

*Pan. (aside).* What a bore he is—always in the way!

*Pao. (aside to Benini).* Signor Pandolfo appears to have a great regard for you.

*Ben. (aside to Paolo).* Quite true; there was a time when I could get him to do anything I wanted.

*Pao. (as before).* Do, like a good fellow, one thing for me,—say a word or two in my favour.

*Ben. (ditto).* In your favour? All right! It is just what I was thinking of doing.

*Pao. (ditto).* Thanks!

*Ben.* (*ditto*). Oh ! you've nothing to thank me for.

*Pao.* (*ditto*). I shall be back soon. (*Exit.*)

*Ben.* (*aside*). Now I'll do his business. (*To Pandolfo.*)  
I understand why you gave permission to that young man to escort your wife and daughter.

*Pan.* I never gave him permission. And what did you understand ?

*Ben.* Galanti is an amiable fellow——

*Pan.* Nothing of the sort !

*Ben.* Witty.

*Pan.* Do you see any wit in *him* ?

*Ben.* Good-looking——

*Pan.* A dandified fool !

*Ben.* Courteous——

*Pan.* Too much so. The fellow agrees with every one.

*Ben.* He would be a son-in-law quite after your own heart. I would, but——

*Pan.* Son-in-law, be hanged ! If you don't look out you will make me use language I shall regret !

*Ben.* Well, don't get angry. . . . Every one believes that he is going to marry your daughter.

*Pan.* Then he may whistle for her. My Elisa's husband ought to be a young man with brains ; and this Galanti of yours is a fool.

*Ben.* Well, not quite that.

*Pan.* He is ! I want a man of character, and this jackan-apes is nothing but a weather-cock !

*Vittorio Bersezio.*



## TRUTH.

[Paolo Severi is in love with his cousin Evelina, who, unknown to him, is being courted by his old schoolfellow, Adolfo Briga. Briga purposely encourages his rival, who is from the country and unused to society, thinking that he will be sure to make himself ridiculous, and so fail. In order the better to carry out this plan he pretends to devote himself to Graziosa, the daughter of the President Manlio, who is visiting at the house of Evelina's parents. Paolo, in his simplicity, does his best to further Adolfo's suit by pleading his cause with Signora Vereconda, Graziosa's mother, a lady whose love of admiration has survived her youth, and who has taken Briga's attentions as a homage to herself.]

*Scene—A drawing-room in the house of the Advocate Scipioni, with a door opening on the garden. Adolfo and Vereconda seated, in conversation. Enter Paolo from the garden just as Adolfo kisses Vereconda's hand.*

*Paolo (aside).* "If you want canes, you must go to the cane-brake; if you want the daughter, you must make yourself agreeable to the mother."<sup>1</sup>

*Vereconda (aside to Adolfo).* Do not agitate yourself. . . .  
He cannot have seen it.

*Pao.* Am I intruding?

*Ver.* Do you think . . . ?

*Pao.* I have just come in to fetch a volume of my aunt's poems. . . . Here it is. I am very sorry that my aunt should expose herself to ridicule by publishing verses like these, in which even the syntax and spelling are wrong! I have a good mind to tell her so myself. . . .

*Adol. (aside to Paolo).* So you have left Evelina? Well done!

*Pao. (aside).* Well done, indeed! It was not *my* choice!

*Adol. (aside).* But, indeed, it is a capital manoeuvre of

<sup>1</sup> A rustic proverb.

war! A woman entreated denies, and neglected entreats!  
Do you remain here instead of me.

*Pao. (aside).* No, indeed!

*Adol. (aside).* Yes, indeed! I'll go and speak artfully for you in the other quarter, and put things right for you in no time!

*Pao. (aside).* But——

*Adol. (aside).* I'll beat the big drum for you, you shall see! Let me go!

*Pao. (aside).* All right. Go!

*Adol. (aside to Vereconda).* I have removed all suspicion on his part. . . . I am going away to make things quite safe.  
(*Aloud.*) Will you excuse me, Signora Vereconda?

*Ver.* Do as you——

*Pao.* And take in my stead these . . . well, let us call them verses. Don Vincenzo, rest his soul, would have called them “uncultivated, rugged songs, which have brought a blush to the revered countenances of Apollo and the Muses.”

*Ver. (to Adolfo, aside).* Who in the world was this Don Vincenzo?

*Adol. (aside to Vereconda).* Who knows? . . . Ah! I have it: the schoolmaster at Borgo di Castello! (*Exit.*)

*Ver. (aside).* How one always recognises the country lout at once!

*Pao. (aside).* What a first-rate friend Adolfo is! And now that I am with his Graziosa's mother, could I do him a service? I should be ungrateful if I did not try; but I too am a real friend.

*Ver. (aside).* He looks as though he had just come from the plough-tail.

*Pao.* Madam. . . .

*Ver.* Sir? . . .

*Pao.* If you permit . . . if I am not wearisome to you . . . may I stay and talk to you a little?

*Ver.* Pray sit down.

*Pao.* To supply the place of my friend is no easy job.

*Ver. (aside).* How vilely he expresses himself!

*Pao.* There are very few like him; he is a fellow who is liked by every one . . . particularly by girls' mothers . . .

*Ver. (aside).* Could he have noticed anything?

*Pao.* He is very fortunate; but he deserves to be so. . . .

*Ver. (aside).* He must have noticed. (*Aloud.*) I don't understand. . . .

*Pao.* Now, look here; Adolfo has no secrets from me. . . . How could he? We have been friends from childhood. . . .

*Ver.* What is all this to lead up to?

*Pao.* This—that the poor old fellow has opened his whole heart to me, and has told me in particular that you are inclined to look on him with favour.

*Ver.* Infamous! To go and say so!

*Pao.* And he hopes . . . yes, I say hopes, that you will grant his request.

*Ver. (rising).* What does he want of me?

*Pao.* Why—from a mother as affectionate as you—what but the hand of your daughter?

*Ver.* What do you say?

*Pao.* Believe me, there is no young man more worthy to possess her. He loves her—loves her devotedly; but the poor fellow wants some encouragement—some protection. . . . Oh, do take him under your protecting wings!

*Ver. (choking with suppressed vexation).* Ah! . . . under my wings?

*Pao.* I have already given him a hint as to his right course. "If you want canes, you must go to the cane-brake. . . ."

*Ver. (aside).* You and your cane-brakes!

*Pao.* A mother who has attained a certain age . . .

*Ver. (aside).* A certain age!!

*Pao.* Such a mother, I say, should have no other thought than that of settling her daughter comfortably before she dies. . . .

*Ver. (aside).* Before she dies!!!

*Pao.* Particularly a good mother like yourself. What do you say—eh? Will you be on his side?

*Ver.* I will . . . I will be . . . whatever my conscience dictates! . . . (*Aside.*) Traitor!—In love with Graziosa. . . . Was that the reason of his attentions to me?

*Pao.* And shall I be able to give my friend some hope?

*Ver.* Why, yes . . . yes . . . give him . . . whatever you think. . . . (*Aside.*) At a certain age! . . . Before she dies! . . . (*Aloud.*) Excuse me. . . . (*Aside.*) Only let me get at you! . . . (*Aloud.*) I shall hope to see you later. (*Exit.*)

*Pao.* Upon my word! if Adolfo is a real friend, I am another;—if he has been beating the big drum for me, I have certainly been blowing his trumpet with all my might.

*Achille Torelli.*



## PASQUIN.

ONE species of wit and humour in which Italians have always excelled is the impromptu epigram—the stinging comment in verse on passing events. The language abounds in rhymes, and easily lends itself to metre; and it is rare to meet with an Italian, however uneducated, who cannot string together a few lines of at least passable quality. Any family event—a marriage, a baptism, or a death—is sure to call forth a shower of sonnets from friends and acquaintances; and on special occasions these contributions are published in volume form. Most of these, indeed, are dull enough reading; but the satirical verses suggested by public events are often amusing enough, though sometimes so local in their application as to have little meaning or interest to outsiders. Many of those translated in the following pages are in Latin, but the knowledge of this language was common enough in Rome to make them almost as popular as verses in the vulgar tongue; and it must be remembered that any Italian with the smallest pretension to culture can turn out a few Latin elegiacs indifferent well. At least this was the case under the *ancien régime*, when such education as was to be had was almost exclusively classical.

This tendency to satiric comment was curbed, but never quite repressed, by the censorship of the *ancien régime*. In Papal Rome it found an outlet in Pasquin, whence the word *Pasquinade* has passed into most of the languages of Europe. Concerning Pasquin, and the epigrams for which he became responsible, we cannot do better than quote from Story's *Roba di Roma*.<sup>1</sup>

"The only type of true Roman humour which now remains since the demise of *Cassandrino* is *Pasquino*. He is the public satirist, who lances his pointed jests against every absurdity and abuse. There he sits on his pedestal behind the Palazzo Braschi—a mutilated torso which, in the days of its pride, was a portion of a noble group, representing, it is supposed, Menelaus dragging the dead body of Patroclus from the fight. . . . Whatever may have been the subject of this once beautiful and now ruined work it is scarcely less famous under its modern name. Pasquino is now the mouthpiece of the most pungent Roman wit.

"The companion and rival of Pasquin in the early days was Marforio. This was a colossal statue representing a river-god, and received its name from the Forum of Mars, where it was unearthed in the sixteenth century. Other friends, too, had Pasquin, who took part in his satiric *conversazioni*, and carried on dialogues with him. Among these was Madama Lucrezia, whose ruined figure still may be seen near the Church of St. Marco, behind the Venetian Palace; the Facchino, or porter, who empties his barrel still in the Corso, though his wit has run dry; the Abbate Luigi of the Palazzo Valle; and the battered Babbuino, who still presides over his fountain in the Via del Babbuino, and gives his name to the street, but who has now lost his features and his voice. Marforio, however, was the chief speaker next to Pasquin, and he still at times joins with him in a satiric dialogue. Formerly there was a constant

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i., pp. 254 *et seq.*

strife of wit between the two ; and a lampoon from Pasquin was sure to call out a reply from Marforio. But of late years Marforio has been imprisoned in the Court of the Campidoglio, and, like many other free speakers, locked up and forbidden to speak ; so that Pasquin has it all his own way. In the time of the Revolution of 1848 he made friends with Don Pirlone and uttered in print his satires. *Il Don Pirlone* was the title of the Roman Charivari of this period. It was issued daily, except on *festa* days, and was very liberal in its politics, and extremely bitter against the *Papalini*, French, and Austrians. The caricatures, though coarsely executed, were full of humour and spirit, and give strong evidence that the satiric fire for which Rome has been always celebrated, though smouldering, is always ready to burst into flame. Take, for instance, as a specimen, the caricature which appeared on the 15th of June 1849. The Pope is here represented in the act of celebrating mass. Oudinot, the French general, acts as the attendant priest, kneeling at the step of the altar, and holding up the pontifical robes. The bell of the mass is the imperial crown. A group of military officers surrounds the altar, with a row of bayonets behind them. The altar candles are in the shape of bayonets. . . . On the sole of one of Oudinot's boots are the words, '*Accomodamento Lesseps*,' and of the other, '*Articolo V. della Costituzione*,' thus showing that he tramples not only on the convention made by Lesseps with the Roman triumvirate on the 31st May, but also on the French constitution, the fifth article of which says, '*La République Française n'emploie jamais ses forces contre la liberté d'aucun peuple.*'<sup>1</sup> Beneath the picture is the motto,

<sup>1</sup> When the French army advanced against Rome, they found the road from Civita Vecchia strewn with large placards, on which this clause of their constitution was printed ; so that they were literally obliged to trample its provisions under-foot, in making as unjustifiable an attack upon the liberties of a people as was ever recorded in history.

‘He has begun the service with mass, and completed it with bombs.’

“On the 2nd July 1849 the French entered Rome, and *Il Don Pirlone* was issued for the last time. The engraving in this number represents a naked female figure lying lifeless on the ground, with a cap of liberty on her head. On a dunghill near by a cock is crowing loudly, while a French general is covering the body with earth. Beneath are these significant words, ‘But, dear Mr. Undertaker, are you so perfectly sure that she is dead?’

“That day Don Pirlone died, and all his works were confiscated. Some, however, still remain, guarded jealously in secret hiding-places, and talked about in whispers; but if you are curious, you may have the luck to buy a copy for 30 or 40 Roman scudi.

“The first acquaintance we make with Pasquin is as an abandoned, limbless fragment of an antique statue, which serves as a butt for boys to throw stones at, and for other slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Near by him lives a tailor, named Pasquino, skilful in his trade, and still more skilful in his epigrams. At his shop many of the *litterati*, prelates, courtiers, and wits of the town meet to order their robes and dresses, report scandal, to anatomise reputations, and kill their time. Pasquino’s humour was contagious, and so many sharp epigrams were made in his shop that it grew to be famous. After Pasquino’s death, in mending the street, it became necessary to remove the old statue, embedded in the ground near by; and to get it out of the way it was set up at the side of his shop. The people then in joke said that Pasquino had come back, and so the statue acquired this nickname, which it has ever since retained. This, at least, is the account given by Castelvetro, published in 1553. . . . However this be, there is no doubt that the custom soon grew up to stick to the statue any lampoon, epigram, or satiric verses which the author



desired to be anonymous, and to pretend that it was a *pasquinata*. From this time Pasquino becomes a name and a power. His tongue could never be ruled. He had his bitter saying on everything. Vainly Government strove to suppress him. At one time he narrowly escaped being thrown into the Tiber by Adrian VI., who was deeply offended by some of his sarcasms ; but he was saved from this fate by the wisdom of the Spanish Legate, who gravely counselled the Pope to do no such act, lest he should thus teach all the frogs in the river to croak pasquinades. In reference to the various attempts made to silence him, he says in an epigram addressed to Paul III.—

“ ‘ Great were the sums once paid to poets for singing ;  
How much will you, O Paul, give me to be silent ? ’

Finally, his popularity became so great that all epigrams, good or bad, were affixed to him. Against this he remonstrated, crying—

“ ‘ Alas ! the veriest copyist sticks upon me his verses ;  
Every one now on me his wretched trifles bestows. ’

This remonstrance seems to have been attended with good results, for shortly after he says—

“ ‘ No man at Rome is better than I ; I seek nothing from any.  
I am never verbose ; here I sit, and am silent. ’

Of late years no collection has been made, so far as I know, of the sayings of Pasquin ; and it is only here and there that they can be found recorded in books or in the ‘hidden tablets of the brain.’ But in 1544 a volume of 637 pages was printed, with the title, *Pasquillorum Tomi Duo*, in which, among a mass of epigrams and satires drawn from various sources, a considerable number of real pasquinades were preserved. This volume is now very rare and costly, most of the copies having been burnt at Rome and elsewhere, on account of the many satires it contained against

the Romish Church ; so rare, indeed, that the celebrated scholar Daniel Heinsius supposed his copy to be unique, as he stated in the inscription written by him on its fly-leaf—

“ ‘ Rome to the fire gave my brothers—I, the single phoenix,  
Live—by Heinsius bought for a hundred pieces of gold.’ ”

In this, however, he was mistaken. There are several other copies now known to be in existence.

“ This collection was edited by Cælius Secundus Curio, a Piedmontese, who, being a reformer, had suffered persecution, confiscation, exile, and imprisonment in the Inquisition. From the latter he escaped, and while spending his later days in exile in Switzerland he printed this volume and sent it forth to harass his enemies and bigoted opponents. The chief aim of the book was to attack the Romish Church ; and some of the satires are evidently German, and probably from the hands of his friends. It is greatly to be regretted that no other collection exists ; and since so great a success has attended the admirable collections of popular songs and proverbs in Tuscany, it is to be hoped that some competent Italian may soon be found who will have the spirit and patience to collect the pasquinades of more modern days.

“ The earliest pasquinades were directed against the Borgia Pope, Alexander VI. (Sextus), the infamy of whose life can scarcely be written. Of him says Pasquin—

“ ‘ Sextus Tarquinius, Sextus Nero—Sextus et iste ;  
Semper sub Sextis perdita Roma fuit.’ ”

(Always under the Sextuses Rome has been ruined.) Again, in allusion to the fact that he obtained his election by the grossest bribery, and, as Guicciardini expresses it, ‘infected the whole world by selling without distinction holy and profane things,’ Pasquino says—

“ ‘ Alexander sells the keys, the altar, Christ :  
He who bought them first has a good right to sell.’ ”

Here, too, is another savage epigram on the Borgian Pope, referring to the murder of his son, Giovanni, Duca di Gandia. His brother, Cesare, Duca di Valentino, slew him at night and threw his body into the Tiber, from which it was fished out next morning—

“ ‘ Lest we should think you not a fisher of men, O Sextus,  
Lo, for your very son with nets you fish ! ’

“ No epigrams worth recording seem to have been made during the short reign of Pius III.; but Julius II., the war-like, fiery, impetuous soldier drew upon himself the constant fire of Pasquin. Alluding to the story that, when leading his army out of Rome, he threw the keys of Peter into the Tiber, saying that he would henceforth trust to the sword of Paul, Pasquin, merely repeating his impetuous words, says—

“ ‘ Since nothing the keys of Peter for battle can profit,  
The sword of Paul, perhaps, may be of use.’

And again, referring to the beard which Julius was the first among the Popes of comparatively late days to wear—

“ ‘ The beard of Paul, and the sword of Paul—I would fain have all  
things of Paul—

As for that key-bearer Peter, he’s not to my liking at all.’

But of all the epigrams on Julius none is so stern and fierce as this—

“ ‘ Julius is at Rome—what is wanting? Ye gods, give us Brutus.  
For whenever at Rome is Julius, the city is lost ! ’

“ If to Julius Pasquin was severe, he was scathing to his licentious and venal successor, Leo X., who raised money for his vices by the sale of cardinals’ hats and indulgences. Many of these epigrams are too coarse to bear translation ; here is one, however, more decent, if less bitter, than many—

“ ‘Bring me gifts, spectators ! bring me not verses.  
Divine money alone rules the ethereal gods.’

And again, referring to Leo's taste for buffoons, he says—

“ ‘Pasquin, why have you never asked to be made a buffoon ?  
All things now are permitted at Rome to buffoons.’

Here is another, referring to the story, current at Rome, that Leo's death was occasioned by poison, and on account of its suddenness there was no time to administer to him the last sacraments—

“ ‘At the last hour of life, if, perchance, you ask why Leo  
Could not the sacraments take—’tis plain he had sold them all !’

“During the short reign of the ascetic Adrian VI. Pasquin seems to have been comparatively silent, perhaps through respect for that hard, bigoted, but honest Pope. Under his successor, Clement VII., Rome was besieged, taken, and sacked by the Constable de Bourbon, and through the horrors of those days Pasquin's voice was seldom heard. One saying of his, however, has been preserved, which was uttered during the period of the Pope's imprisonment in the Castle Saint Angelo. With a sneer at his infallibility and his imprisonment, he says : ‘Papa non potest errare’—‘The Pope cannot err (or go astray)’—*errare* having both meanings. But if Pasquin spared the Pope during his life he threw a handful of epigrams on his coffin at his death. . . . Thus in reference to the physician, Matteo Curzio, or Curtius, to whose ignorance Clement's death was attributed—

“ ‘Curtius has killed our Clement—let gold then be given  
To Curtius for thus securing the public health.’

“On Paul III., the Farnese Pope, Pasquin exercised his wit, but not always very successfully. This Pope was celebrated for his nepotism, and for the unscrupulous ways in which he endeavoured to build up his house and enrich

his family, and one of Pasquin's epigrams refers to this, as well as to the well-known fact that he built his palace by despoiling the Colosseum of its travertine—

“ ‘ Let us pray for Pope Paul, for his zeal,  
For his house is eating him up.’ ”

“ With Paul III. ceases the record of the *Pasquillorum Tomi Duo*, published at Eleutheropolis in 1544, and we now hunt out only rarely here and there an epigram. Against Sextus V., that cruel, stern old man, who never lifted his eyes from the ground until he had attained that great reward for all his hypocritical humility, the papal chair, several epigrams are recorded. One of these, in the form of dialogue, and given by Leti in his life of Sextus, is worth recording for the story connected with it. Pasquin makes his appearance in a very dirty shirt, and being asked by Marforio the reason of this, answers that he cannot procure a clean shirt because his washerwoman has been made a princess by the Pope; thus referring to the story that the Pope's sister had formerly been a laundress. This soon came to the ears of the Pope, who ordered that the satirist should be sought for and punished severely. All researches, however, were vain. At last, by his order and in his name, placards were posted in the public streets, promising, in case the author would reveal his name, to grant him not only his life, but a present of a thousand pistoles; but threatening, in case of his discovery by any other person, to hang him forthwith, and give the reward to the informer. The satirist thereupon avowed the authorship and demanded the money. Sextus, true to the letter of his proclamation, granted him his life and paid him the one thousand pistoles; but in utter violation of its spirit, and saying that he had not promised absolution from all punishment, ordered his hands to be struck off and his tongue to be bored, ‘to hinder him from being so witty in future.’ ”

“But Pasquin was not silenced even by this cruel revenge, and a short time after, in reference to the tyranny of Sextus, appeared a caricature representing the Pope as King Stork devouring the Romans as frogs, with the motto, ‘*Merito hæc patimur*,’ i.e. ‘*Serves us right*.’

“Against Urban VIII., the Barberini Pope, whose noble palace was built out of the quarry of the Colosseum, who tore the bronze plates from the roof of the Pantheon, to cast into the tasteless *baldacchino* of St. Peter’s, and under whose pontificate so many antique buildings were destroyed, Pasquin uttered the famous saying—

“ ‘What the barbarians have left undone, the Barberini have done.’

“And on the occasion of Urban’s issuing a bull, excommunicating all persons who took snuff in the churches at Seville, Pasquin quoted from Job this passage, ‘Against a leaf driven to and fro by the wind, wilt thou show thy strength? and wilt thou pursue the light stubble?’

“The ignorant, indolent, profligate Innocent X., with the equally profligate Donna Olympia Maidalchini, afforded also a target to Pasquin’s arrows. Of the Pope, he says—

“ ‘Olympia he loves more than Olympus.’

“During the reign of Innocent XI., the Holy Office flourished, and its prisons were put in requisition for those who dared to speak freely or to think freely. Pasquin, in reference to this, says: ‘*Se parliamo, in galera; se scriviamo, impiccati; se stiamo in quiete, al Santo Uffizio. Eh!—che bisogna fare?*’ (If we speak, to the galleys; if we write, to the gallows; if we keep quiet, to the Inquisition. Eh!—what are we to do?)

“Throughout Rome, the stranger is struck by the constant recurrence of the inscription, ‘*Munificentia Pii Sexti*’ (By the munificence of Pius VI.), on statues and monuments and repaired ruins, and big and little antiquities. When, there-

fore, this Pope reduced the loaf of two *baiocchi* considerably in size, one of them was found hung on Pasquin's neck, with the same inscription, 'Munificentia Pii Sexti.'

"Against the despotism of this same Pope, when he was building the great Braschi Palace, Pasquin wrote these lines—

" ' Three jaws had Cerberus, and three mouths as well,  
Which barked into the blackest deeps of hell.  
Three hungry mouths have you—ay ! even four,  
Which bark at none, but every one devour.'

"During the French Revolution, and the occupation of Rome by the French, Pasquin uttered some bitter sayings, and among them this—

" ' I Francesi son tutti ladri—  
Non tutti—ma Buona parte.'

(The French are all thieves—nay, not all, but *a good part*—or, in the original, *Buonaparte*.)

"Here also is one referring to the institution of the Cross of the Legion of Honour in France, which is admirable in wit—

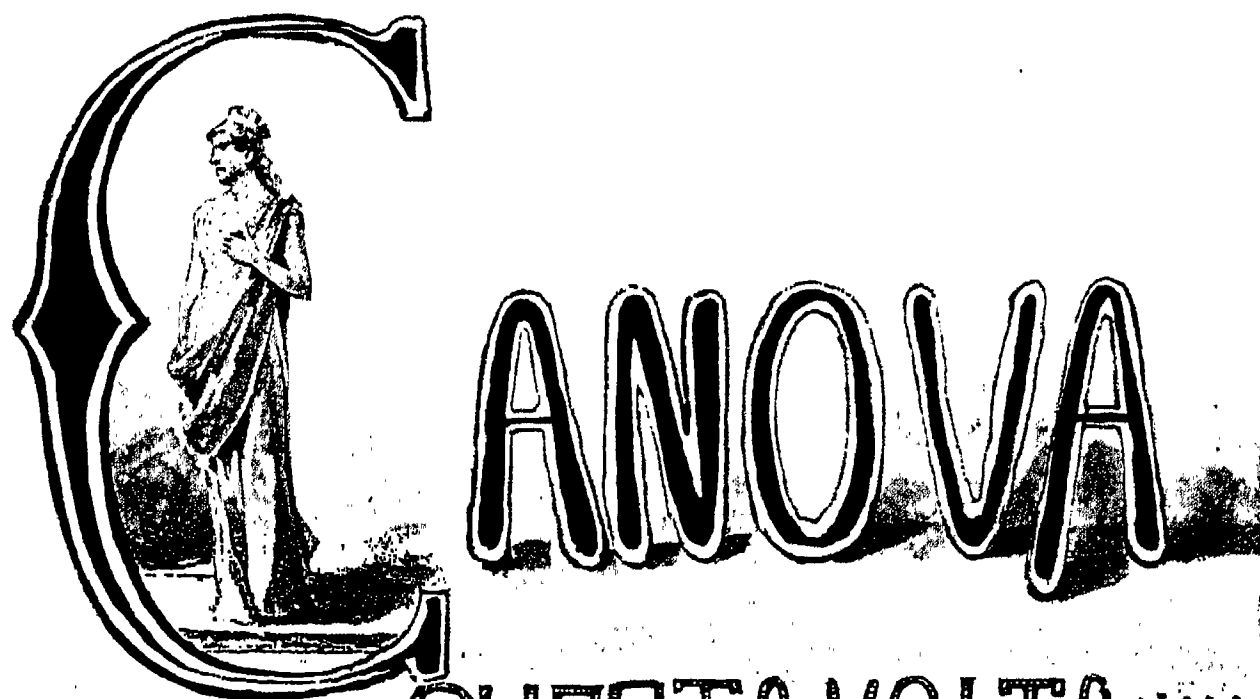
" ' In times less pleasant and more fierce, of old,  
The thieves were hung on crosses, so we're told ;  
In times less fierce, more pleasant, like to-day,  
Crosses are hung upon the thieves, they say.'

"When the Emperor Francis of Austria visited Rome, Pasquin called him 'Gaudium urbis—Fletus provinciorum—Risus mundi.' (The joy of the city—the tears of the provinces—the laughter of the world.)

"A clever epigram was also made on Canova's draped statue of Italy—

" ' For once Canova surely has tripped :  
Italy is not draped but stripped.'

"The latter days of Pius IX. have opened a large field for



QUESTA VOLTA L'HA  
SBAGLIATA FÉ L'ITALIA  
VESTITA

ED E'

SPOGLIATA



EPIGRAM ON CANOVA'S STATUE OF ITALY.



Pasquin, and his epigrams have a flavour quite equal to that of the best of which we have any record. When, in 1858, the Pope made a journey through the provinces of Tuscany, leaving the administration in the hands of Cardinal Antonelli and other cardinals of the Sacred College, the following dialogue was found on Pasquin :—

“ ‘The Shepherd then is gone away?’

“ ‘Yes, sir.’

“ ‘And whom has he left to take care of the flock?’

“ ‘The dogs.’

“ ‘And who keeps the dogs?’

“ ‘The mastiff.’

“The wit of Pasquin, as of all Romans, is never purely verbal, for the pun, simply as a pun, is little relished in Italy; ordinarily the wit lies in the thought and image, though sometimes it is expressed by a play upon words as well, as in the epigram on Buonaparte. The ingenious method adopted by the Italians to express their political sympathies with Victor Emmanuel was thoroughly characteristic of Italian humour. Forbidden by the police to make any public demonstration in his favour, the Government were surprised by the constant shouts of ‘Viva Verdi! Viva Verdi!’ at all the theatres, as well as by finding these words scrawled on all the walls of the city. But they soon discovered that the cries for Verdi were through no enthusiasm for the composer, but only because his name was an acrostic signifying

‘VITTORIO EMANUELE, RE D’ ITALIA.’

“Of a similar character was a satire in dialogue, which appeared in 1859, when all the world at Rome was waiting and hoping for the death of King Bomba, of execrated memory. Pasquin imagines a traveller just returned from Naples, and inquires of him what he has seen there—

“ ‘Ho visto un tumore.’ (I have seen a tumour.)

“ ‘Un tumore? ma che cosa è un tumore?’ (A tumour? but what is a tumour?)

“ ‘Leva il *t* per risposta.’ (Take away the *t* for answer.)

“ ‘Ah! un umore; ma questo umore porta danno?’ (Ah! a humour;<sup>1</sup> but is this humour dangerous?)

“ ‘Leva l’*u* per risposta.’ (Take away the *u*.)

“ ‘More! che peccato! ma quando? Fra breve?’ (He dies (*more*)! but what a pity! When? Shortly?)

“ ‘Leva l’*m*.’ (Take away the *m*.)

“ ‘Ore! fra ore! ma chi dunque ha quest’ umore?’ (Hours! (*ore*) in a few hours! but who then has this humour?)

“ ‘Leva l’*o*.’ (Take away the *o*.)

“ ‘Rè! Il Rè! Ho piacere davvero! Ma poi, dove andrà?’ (King! (*re*) the king! I am delighted! But then where will he go?)

“ ‘Leva l’*r*.’ (Take away the *r*.)

“ ‘E-ch! e-e-e-h!’

with a shrug and a prolonged tone peculiarly Roman—indicative of an immense doubt as to Paradise, and little question as to the other place.

“Two years ago Pasquin represents himself as having joined the other plenipotentiaries at the conference of Zurich, where he represents the Court of Rome. Austria speaks German, France speaks French, neither of which languages Pasquin understands. On being interrogated as to the views of Rome, he answers that, being a priest, he only speaks Latin, not Italian; and that, in his opinion, is ‘Sicut erat in principio,’ etc. (As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end! Amen.)

“This is as pure a specimen of true Roman wit as can be found. Of a rather different and punning character was the epigram lately made upon the movement of the Piedmontese and Garibaldians on Naples and Sicily: ‘Tutti stanno in viaggio—soldati vanno per terra—marinari

<sup>1</sup> Used in the same sense as by our sixteenth and seventeenth century writers. The old medical terminology still survives to a great extent in Italy; as does, or did till recently, the ancient practice of medicine which consisted chiefly in blood-letting.

vanno per mare, e preti vanno in aria.' (Everybody is in movement—the soldiers go by land, the sailors by sea, and the priests vanish into air.)

“And here too is another, full of spirit and point, which shall be the last in these pages. When the conference at Zurich was proposed, it was rumoured that Cardinal Antonelli was to go as the representative of the Roman States, and to be accompanied by Monsignor Barile, upon which Pasquin said, ‘Il Cardinale di Stato va via con Barile, ma tornerà con fiasco’—which is untranslatable.”<sup>1</sup>

There are several collections of Pasquinades in the British Museum, but none appear to extend over more than a single year. None are later than 1536. The collection for that year has the following MS. note (in English) on the fly-leaf: “The Author of these Pasquinades is quite unknown. They have little of the Petulance or Wit of that species of writing, and consist principally of grave and fulsome Compliments to the Emperor Charles 5th on his late Victories over the Moors in Africa.” There is, however, a humorous prose proclamation in Italian (the rest of the book is mostly in Latin), “in order to enrich simple men who waste their time in the practice of Alchemy.” To these persons he delivers ten commandments, such as, “Always to have a pair of bellows and keep it in its place, so that you may not have to send and borrow from the neighbours—to know the properties of metals—to use good earthenware—and to employ an honest lad who will stick to his work and not talk,” etc., etc.

About 1550 we find a curious little broadsheet entitled an “opera,” but more like a street ballad—a kind of proclama-

<sup>1</sup> The meaning is, “The Cardinal is going away with the Cask (*Barile*), but he will come back with the flask,”—the word *fiasco* having this sense as well as that in which it is sometimes employed by us, of “failure,” or “disaster.” Needless to add, the above was written before the establishment of the Regno in 1870.

tion, announcing that Pasquin has lost his nose, and is making search for it. In the course of the next century several prose works were issued under the name of Pasquin, which were mostly dialogues between Pasquin and Marforio. Many of them were translated into English, and appear to have enjoyed a wide popularity towards the end of Charles II.'s reign—which is not to be wondered at, if we remember that this was the era of the Popish plot, and that Pasquin is by no means sparing in his denunciations of the Roman clergy. The *Visione Politiche* were printed in 1671, probably at Geneva, and *Pasquin risen from the Dead* appeared in London in 1674. This book must have been popular, as at least one other translation was published. The version of 1674—the translator's name is not given—is quaint and spirited; and the general tenor of the work may be gathered from the following extract:—

*Pasquin.* What, ho! Marforio! you're in mighty haste, sure; what, not so much as vouchsafe a word to an old friend, but to pass by as though we had never seen one another before?

*Marforio.* God's my life! what's he that calls me? Sure I have known that voice. It must certainly be Pasquin that talks in that statue. And yet how can that be, since I am a witness of his death? 'Tis surely some ghost that would fain make me believe he is yet living. What would I give for some holy water to drive this devil away now!

*Pasquin.* Prithee, sweetheart, been't frightened; I am Pasquin, very Pasquin, thy old pot-companion. Why shouldst thou wish for holy water to drive me hence, since I am miraculously risen? . . . And prithee, by the way, be no longer cheated with that fond opinion that holy water is able to drive away devils. Those are old wives' fables, fit only to bubble fools withal; for, were there any such thing, since there can be no worse devil than the priests and friars, they had been all driven out of the church long ago.

*Marforio.* Where the devil hadst thou this knowledge? Sure, thou hast not been in hell to fetch it? I am almost in an ague to think of it, and the more I look on thee the more I tremble.

*Pasquin.* Been't such a fool to be afraid to look upon a friend, for true friendship should last even to the other world: but I am no ghost or goblin, but verily alive; or were I dead (as indeed I have been), what reason hast thou to fear me? The dead are honest, quiet people: they neither kill nor steal; they ramble not about the streets in the night to murder poor tailors; they break no glass windows, nor beat no watches, nor are any violators of the laws. Whilst I was in the world I was never afraid of the dead. If I could but guard myself from the living, who are a proud, revengeful generation, that scarce pardon men in their graves, I thought all well enough; therefore, prithee, be of my mind. . . . Take my counsel, keep as fair as thou canst with the living, and leave the dead to their fate.

*Marforio.* Yet at least let me have commune with thee, that com'st to seek mine with so much grace and civility.

*Pasquin.* I am alive and not dead, for my death was rather a wonderful ecstasy than anything else.

*Marforio.* But tell me, prithee, how is it possible that thou, who art a body of stone, as thou art, couldst first be animated, then die, and be revived again?

*Pasquin.* And canst thou that art born a Roman be such a noddy as to wonder at that—thou that seest daily so many greater wonders before thy eyes? With how much more reason mayst thou wonder to see so many tun-bellied friars (the good always excepted) that feed like pigs and drink like fishes; that fatten themselves in the scoundrel laziness of the convents, and yet have the impudence to think they shall one day enjoy the felicities of Paradise? And yet greater wonders than this there are. For thou knowest, or at least shouldst know, that all divines agree that there is

nothing in the world that can be equal in weight to the nature of sin; for, say they, iron, lead, stones, brass, or gold are, in comparison, lighter than feathers when put in the scale with sin. So that he must needs be worse than a sot that believes that so many bouncing friars, as well seculars as regulars, who are laden with such a mass of sins that only to lift one of them from the ground would require an engine like that wherewith Sixtus V. raised the great Pyramid of St. Peter,<sup>1</sup> can ever mount up to heaven. . . . This, brother, must needs be so great a folly that any man of reason cannot but imagine it a less wonder to see a stone mount up to heaven than one of those sinful monks.

Pasquin then describes his journey through the Unseen World, which is made the vehicle for a great deal of strong invective against the Pope and Clergy. No Pope, he says, has ever entered heaven since the year 800, "that is, soon after corruption was crept into the Pontificate;" and the infernal regions are peopled with the various religious orders. Pasquin sought in vain among them for the Jesuits—but only because a separate and special place of torment was reserved for the latter.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, the obelisk in the Piazza di S. Pietro.

*EPIGRAMS.*

I DO not please all my readers?—But see,——  
Is it every reader that pleases me?——

The tolling of church-bells, O Doctor Ismenus,—dost find  
it a bore?

Write no more prescriptions, O Doctor, and then they will  
toll no more!

Here lies a cardinal  
Who did more ill than good.  
The good he did badly,  
The ill as well as he could.

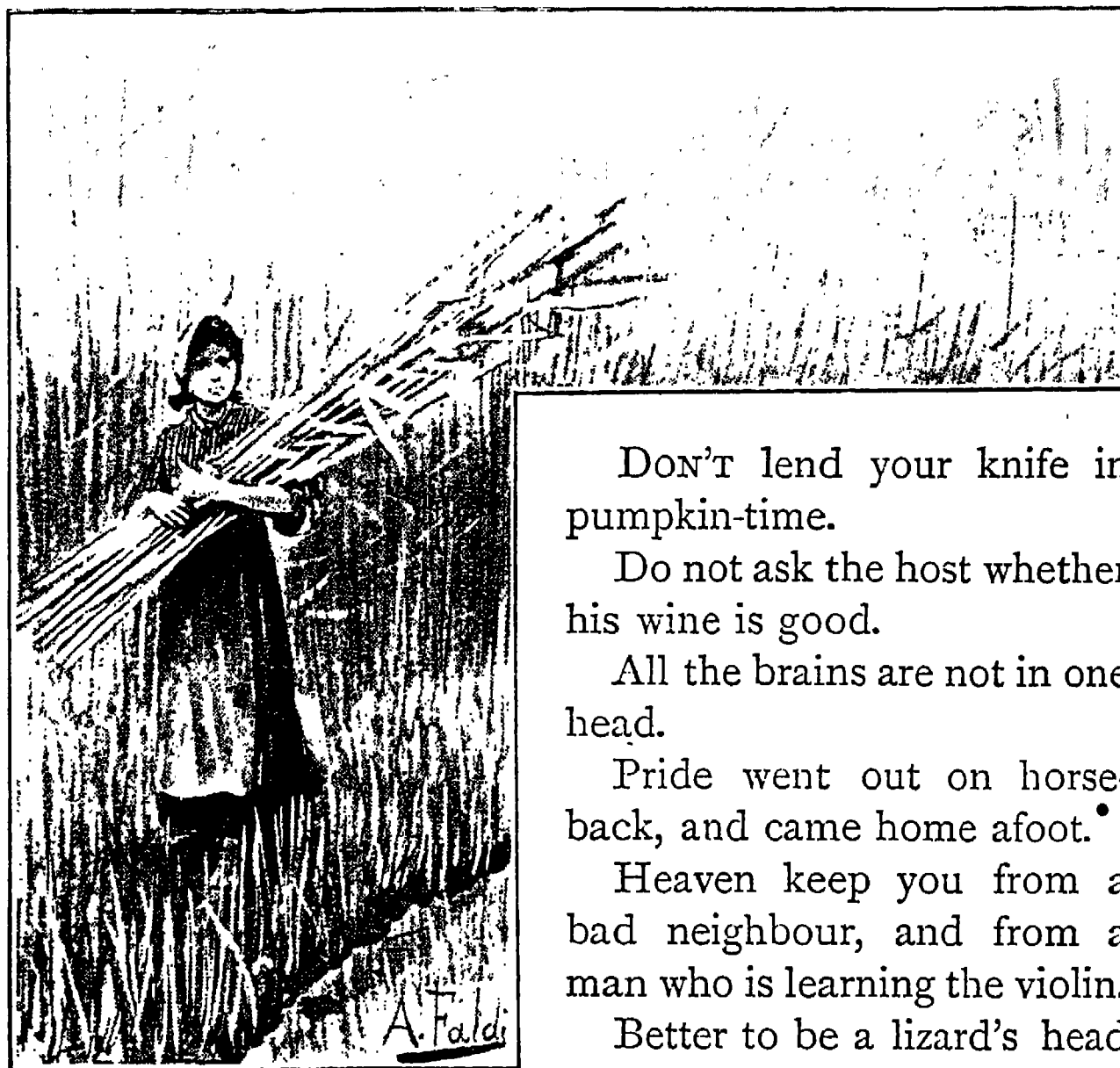
A monk to a dying sinner said, “Beware!  
Just now, as I was coming up the stair,  
I saw the devil come for you——” “But stay,—  
What shape had he?” “An ass.” “Good father, nay!—  
It was your shadow frightened you to-day!”

Professor Ardei’s ashes in this urn  
Repose. Dame Nature intended him to teach——  
So he was never able aught to learn.

Gian Maria’s ill-conditioned wife  
Was bitten by a viper yester-eve.  
“Then, I suppose, she’s yielded up her life?”  
“No, sir—that ’twas the viper died, I grieve!”

“The abbey has been struck by lightning.” “Where?”  
“’Twas in the library.” “Thank heaven’s care!——  
The friars, holy men!—uninjured are!”——

*PROVERBS, FOLK-LORE, AND TRADITIONAL  
ANECDOTES.*



Don't lend your knife in  
pumpkin-time.

Do not ask the host whether  
his wine is good.

All the brains are not in one  
head.

Pride went out on horse-  
back, and came home afoot.

Heaven keep you from a  
bad neighbour, and from a  
man who is learning the violin.

Better to be a lizard's head  
than a dragon's tail.

Drink wine, and let water go to drive the mill.

If I sleep, I sleep for myself; if I work, I don't know  
whom I work for.

Let us have florins, and we shall find cousins.

Peel the fig for your friend and the peach for your  
enemy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The skin of the fig is supposed to be injurious, that of the peach  
wholesome.



In buying a horse and taking a wife, shut your eyes and trust God for your life.

Women are saints in church, angels in the street, devils in the house, owls (*civette, i.e. coquettes*) at the window, and magpies at the door.

Women always tell the truth, but never the whole truth.

Maids weep with one eye, wives with two, and nuns with four.

When God gives flour, the devil takes away the sack.

Have nothing to do with an innkeeper's daughter or a miller's horse.



He who wants canes should go to the cane-brake; and he who would court the daughter should be polite to the mother.

For the buyer a hundred eyes are too few, for the seller one is enough.

If you want to have your hands full buy a watch, take a wife, or beat a friar.

God keep thee from the fury of the wind, from a monk outside his monastery, from a woman who can speak Latin, and from a man who cannot hold up his head.

Brother Modestus was never made Prior.

Tie up the ass where his owner tells you, and if he breaks his neck the blame is not yours.

You cannot drink and whistle at the same time; you cannot both carry the cross and sing with the choir.

An unfrocked monk and warmed-up cabbage were never yet good for anything.

There are no pockets in the shroud.

Where there are many cocks crowing it never gets light.

He carries both yes and no in his pocket.

Three are powerful—the Pope, the king, and the man who has nothing.

Make me your steward for one year, and I shall be a rich man.

Never give a woman as much as she wants—unless it be of flax to spin.

All the seven deadly sins are feminine.

Lies have short legs.

With time and straw medlars get ripe.

Beware of fire, of water, of dogs, and of the man who speaks under his breath.

The poor man's commandments are these—'Thou shalt not eat meat on Friday, nor on Saturday, nor yet on Sunday.

He who seeks better bread than is made of wheat must be either a fool or a knave.

He who sleeps with dogs will get up with fleas.

He who eats a bone chokes himself.

Bread and kicks will get no thanks, even from a dog.

Make haste and get rich—and then I am your uncle.

You call on St. Paul without having seen the viper. (You cry out before you are hurt.)

When two have set their minds on each other, a hundred cannot keep them apart.

On a fool's beard the barber learns to shave.

A MAN who was pleading asked a judge whether the lawyer or the physician had the precedence in any judicial affair. Says the judge, "Pray, who goes first, the criminal or the executioner?" "The criminal," replied the pleader. "Then," says the judge, "the lawyer may go first as the thief, and the physician follow after as the executioner."

A CERTAIN person who had squandered away all his patrimony being at an entertainment, one of the guests said, "The earth used to swallow up men, but this man has swallowed up the earth."

A POOR man, presenting himself before the King of Spain, asked his charity, telling him that he was his brother. The king desiring to know how he claimed kindred to him, the poor fellow replied, "We are all descended from one common father and mother—viz., Adam and Eve." Upon which the king gave him a little copper piece of money. The poor man began to bemoan himself, saying, "Is it possible that your Majesty should give no more than this to your brother?" "Away, away," replies the king; "if all the brothers you have in the world give you as much as I have done, you'll be richer than I am."

A CERTAIN man reading a book that treated of the secrets of nature, fell upon a chapter in which 'twas said that a man who has a long beard wears the badge of a fool. Upon which our reader takes up the candle in his hand, for 'twas in the night-time, and views himself in the glass, and inconsiderately burns above half his beard off; whereupon he immediately takes up the pen and writes in the margin of the book, "*Probatum est*,"—that is, I know him to be a fool.

A CERTAIN person who was to engage with swords against

another, knowing that his antagonist was a braver man than himself, would not stand the trial; but made off as fast as possible. Now it happened, as he was discoursing one day with some of his acquaintance, they reproached him for having run away in so scandalous a manner. "Pooh!" replied he, "I had much rather the world should say that in such a place a coward had been put to flight, than that a brave man had been killed."

A SOLDIER selling a horse, his captain asked him why he did so. He replied that 'twas in order to fly from the tumult of arms. Says the captain, "I wonder you should sell it for the very same reason for which I imagined you had bought it."

TESETTO was very angry with Zerbo the physician, when Zerbo saying to him, "Hold your tongue, you scoundrel; don't I know that your father was a bricklayer?" Tesetto immediately replied, "No one could have told you that but your own father, who carried the lime and the stones to mine."

A CRIMINAL being carried to prison, and hearing his process read, confessed that every article in it was true, and said, "I have done still worse." Being asked in what, he replied with a sigh, "In suffering myself to be brought hither."

A CERTAIN person, who was desirous to be thought young, said that he was but thirty, when a friend of his, who had been his schoolfellow replied, "So, I warrant you, you were not born when we studied logic together."

A THIEF going with a trunk full of valuable things from a citizen's house in the dusk of the evening, was met by some persons who asked him how he came by them. The thief replied, "A man is dead in this house, and I am carrying this trunk, with other things, to another house where I am

going to live." "But if that man be lately dead," said they, "why don't they weep and take on?" "You'll hear them weep to-morrow morning," says the thief.

A MAN bemoaning himself to another for the great scarcity of corn, and saying he believed that if it did not rain all the beasts would die, the other replied to him, "Heaven preserve your worship!"

A PHYSICIAN, who had a son of his under cure, gave him no remedy, and prescribed nothing, but only that he should observe a regular course of diet. His daughter-in-law complained, and asked him why he did not treat him like other sick people; and the physician replied, "Daughter, we physicians have medicaments in order to sell them, and not to make use of them ourselves."

A CERTAIN lazzarone once came to confess himself to a missionary priest who was confined to his bed with the gout, with the intention of stealing a pair of new shoes which he had seen under the good father's bed. The priest having called him up to the bed, as he could not rise, the man knelt down, and while reciting the *Confiteor* got hold of the shoes, and put them into the wallet which he had under his cloak. Having finished the *Confiteor*, the first and last sin which he confessed was that of having stolen a pair of shoes. The confessor replied, "Ah! my son, you ought to restore them!" The penitent replied, "Father, do you want them?" "No," said the priest, "no, my son; but they ought to be restored to the rightful owner, otherwise I cannot give you absolution." "But, father," replied the man, "the owner says he does not want them; what, then, shall I do?" The confessor answered, "Since that is so, keep them for yourself," and giving him absolution, he dismissed him, and the penitent carried off the shoes.

DANTE, meditating apart one day in the church of Santa Maria Novella, was accosted by a bore, who asked him many foolish questions. After vainly endeavouring to get rid of him, Dante at last said, "Before I reply to thee do thou tell me the answer to a certain question," and then asked him, "*Which is the greatest of all beasts?*" The gentleman replied that "on the authority of Pliny he believed it to be the elephant." Then said Dante, "O elephant, leave me in peace!" and so saying, he turned and left him.

DOMENICO DA CIGOLI having gone to Rome, news was brought him a few days after that his wife was dead; upon which he, in the utmost transports of joy, immediately became priest and undertook the cure of souls in his own village, when who should be the very first person that he meets but his wife, who was not dead but living, which greatly afflicted him.

A CERTAIN rich man had a son who had but little sense, and wishing to get him a wife, found a fair and gentle damsel; and her parents being willing to overlook the defects of the man for the sake of his riches, the marriage was concluded. Then the father, in order to hide as much as he could the imbecile foolishness of his son, admonished him to speak little, that his folly and light-mindedness might not be made manifest. The son obeyed; and when they were seated at the wedding-feast it happened that not only he but all the others kept silence, till at last a lady of more courage than the rest said, looking round at the guests, "Surely there must be a fool at this table, since no one ventures to speak!" Then said the bridegroom, turning to his father, "Father, now that they have found me out, pray give me permission to talk!"



A COUNTRYMAN, benumbed with cold, alighted from his horse to walk on foot, and two Franciscan friars observing this, one of them said to his companion, "Had I a horse I would not be such a fool as to lead him by the bridle, but would make use of him to carry me to the convent." Says the other, who was of a gay temper, "I would play this countryman a trick, and steal his horse from him, if you would but help me." The friar immediately consenting, both of them stole very softly up to the countryman, without his perceiving it; and one, slyly taking the bridle off the horse, put it over his own head, while the other with a halter led the horse aside. Not long after this the countryman, intending to get on horseback again, turned himself about, but had like to have died with fear when he saw the change; and, uttering terrible cries for help, he was stopped by the Franciscan, who went down on his knees before him, and begged him very humbly to give him his liberty, telling him that he had been condemned to such a metamorphosis because of his irregularities, and the enormities of his sins; and that the time of his penance being expired, he was returned to his first shape. The peasant, recovering himself a little, not only let him go, but also, not smelling the trick in the least, foolishly replied, "Get you gone in Heaven's name; I now no longer wonder if, after having led so disorderly a life, you should have been changed into so vile an animal." The friar, telling him that he was greatly obliged to him, made off, and went to look after his companion, and when they saw the poor silly fellow at a good distance, went another way to a neighbouring town. A few days after, the Franciscans desired a friend of theirs to go and sell the horse at the fair. This man sold the horse, and as he was going with the buyer to receive the money for it, whom should they happen to meet but the countryman, who, knowing the horse again, desired the buyer to let him speak a word with



him in private ; and having asked him whom the horse belonged to, the other replied that he had just bargained for it, but had not yet paid for it. "For goodness' sake," said the countryman, "return it to him again ; don't pay for it, for I assure you that 'tis not a horse, but the soul of a cordelier, who is returned to his dissolute way of life. Don't buy him, I tell you, for he's the most wretched animal in the whole world, and has put me into a fury an hundred thousand times."

#### HOW PIOVANO ARLOTTO GOT HIS PLACE BY THE FIRE.

Piovano Arlotto, returning from Casentino one Sunday evening, worn out and wet through (for it was raining heavily), dismounted before the inn at Pontassieve and went in, to dry himself at the fire. But, as it happened, there were over thirty villagers present, drinking and playing cards, and they were crowded so closely about the fire that he could not get near it, nor would they make room for him, though he asked them. At last, mine host, who knew him for a fellow of infinite jest, said to him, "Sir • priest, why are ye so sad this evening, quite contrary to your nature? If there be aught troubling ye, tell us, for there is nothing we would not do for ye." The priest said, "I am in evil case, for I have lost, from this wallet, fourteen *lire* of small change, and eighteen gold florins. Yet I have hope of finding them again ; for I think 'tis but within the last five miles I dropped them, and the weather is so bad, there is none will travel that road after me to-night. And if ye will do me a service, then, to-morrow morning if it rain not, do thou come, or send a man back along the road with me to find it." Scarcely had the priest finished speaking, when those countrymen went out softly, by twos and fours, so that at the last there was none left, and went back along the road in the rain, hoping to find the money, leaving the priest to take the best place by the fire.

## FAGIUOLI AND THE THIEVES.

One evening Fagiuoli was going home, and when he came to his door he saw some men bringing out his furniture, for they were thieves who were stealing his things. He said nothing, but remained quiet, wishing to see where they would take the things. When they had brought them all down, they put them on barrows and took them away, Fagiuoli walking after them. When the thieves saw a gentleman following them, they stopped and asked him what he wanted. Then he answered, "I am coming to see where I am going to live, as you have moved my furniture." Then the thieves threw themselves down on their knees, and carried back his things; but he did not bring the matter before the magistrates.

## THE THREE WORDS.

There was once a husband and wife, and they had three sons who did not know how to talk. The time came when their parents died, and, when they were both dead, the eldest boy said, "Do you know what I have thought of? We will go and travel about the world, and so we shall hear people talk, and learn to talk ourselves." So they set out, and they came to three roads. "Let us each go a different way, and the first who has learnt anything come back here; and then we will seek service with some one."

The eldest took the middle road, and came to a churchyard, and as he passed it he saw two men talking together. He came up with them and heard one of them say "*Yes.*" "Ah! I have learnt enough—I have learnt to talk; now I will go back!" He went back to the place where the roads met and found no one there. There was an inn near by, and he went in to have something to eat.

The second brother went on till he came to two peasants carrying a bundle of hay, who were talking. He listened to them, and heard one say, "*It is true.*" "I have learnt enough—I will go back;" and he went back to the cross-roads as his brother had done

The youngest went on till evening, when he saw a herd-lassie getting her sheep together, and heard her say, "*That's right.*" "I've learnt enough," he said; "I'm going back."

He came to the cross-roads, and found his brothers there. "What have you learnt?" "I know *Yes.*" "And you?" "*It is true.* And you?" "*That's right.*" "Now we can go to the king's palace to take service, now that we know these words." So they all three started by the same road. When they had gone some distance they found a dog-kennel, got into it all three, and slept soundly. At midnight the dog wanted to go to bed,—he barked and barked, but they would not let him in, so that he had to sleep outside. "See," said they, "to-night we have a dog to guard us, like other people, but to-morrow morning we shall have to go away quietly, without waking him."

They got up in the morning, but the dog was asleep, and did them no harm. Further on along the road they found a dead man. "Look at this poor man!—he ought to be taken into the city—we must let the police know."

One of them went on to the city, and gave notice, and the police came out. "Who killed him? Did you do it?" The eldest answered "*Yes,*" for he could say nothing else; and the second said, "*It is true.*" "Then you will have to come to prison." And the youngest said, "*That's right.*"

So they seized them, and took them away to the town along with the dead man. In the town all the people cried out, "They ought to be torn to pieces! They have said it themselves! the villains!" And they could answer nothing but *Yes, It is true, and That's right.*

So, after asking them a great many questions, and getting nothing else out of them, they put them in prison; and after they had kept them there some time, they let them go, because they found out that they were only fools. So the three brothers went home again.



## GIUCCA.

One day Giucca's mother said to him, "I want this cloth sold, but if I let you take it to the market you will be at your old tricks again."

"No, mother; you shall see I will do it all right. Tell me how much you want for it."

"Ten crowns; and mind you sell it to a person who does not talk much."

Giucca took the cloth, and went away. He met a peasant, who said to him, "Giucca, are you going to sell this cloth? How much do you want for it?"

"Ten crowns."

"No, that is too much."

"Now, look here—I can't let you have it at all, because you talk too much."

"Why, do you want to sell your goods without people's saying anything?"

"Oh! I can't let you have it."

Giucca went on. When he had gone a little further, he came to a statue of plaster of Paris.

"Oh! good woman, do you want to buy some cloth?"

The statue said nothing.

Said Giucca: "This is just right. Mother told me to sell the cloth to some one who does not talk. I couldn't do better than this. I say, good woman! I want ten crowns for it"—and he threw the cloth at her; "to-morrow I will come and fetch them."

And he went home, well pleased. His mother said, "Giucca, have you sold the cloth?"

"Yes," said Giucca; "they told me I was to come and fetch the money to-morrow."

"But tell me—did you give it to a trustworthy person?"

"I think so. She was a good sort of woman, you may believe that!"

Let us leave Giucca, and go back to the statue, which was hollow, and was the place where some robbers hid their money. In the evening they came with some more money to put away inside the image.

"Look," they said, "some one has left this cloth; let us keep it." They hid the money and carried off the cloth.

In the morning, when Giucca got up, he said, "Mother, I am going to fetch that money."

"Very good; be quick about it, and mind they give you the whole of it."

Giucca went to the statue. "Hallo, mistress, I've come for the money!"

The statue said nothing.

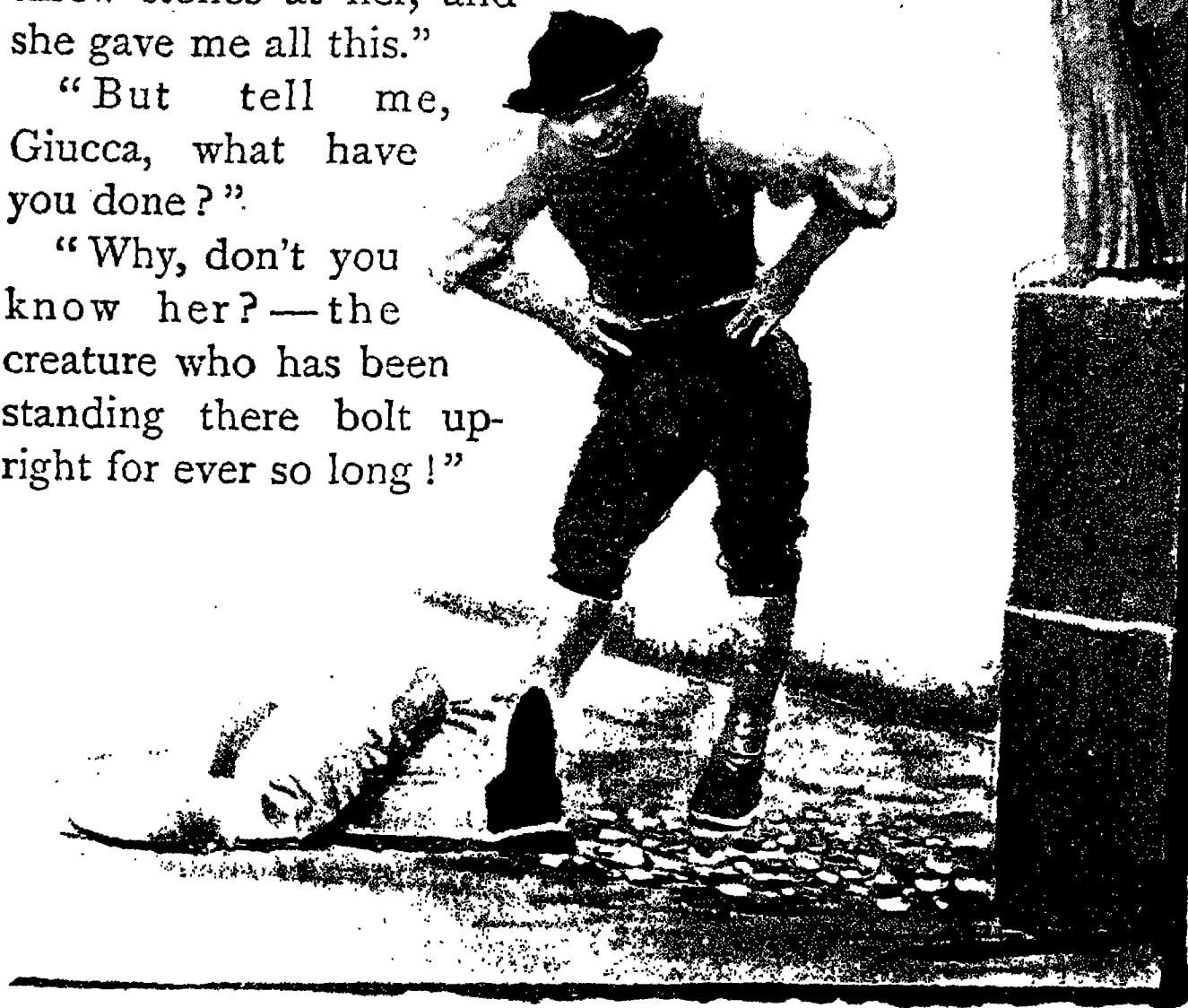
"Oh! look here! It must not be the same as yesterday; to-day I want the money. I see you have used the cloth. Give me the money, or let me have the cloth back."

So he picked up a stone and threw it at her. And then the statue was broken; and all the money began to fall out. Giucca was well pleased; he picked up the money and went home.

"Look, mother, how much money I have brought you! I told you she was a good sort of woman. First she did not want to give it me, but then I threw stones at her, and she gave me all this."

"But tell me, Giucca, what have you done?"

"Why, don't you know her?—the creature who has been standing there bolt upright for ever so long!"



"Oh! you rascal! what have you done? Dear me! dear me! With all this money I had better find you a wife to look after you!"

#### THE HERMIT AND THE THIEVES.

. . . Once, she said, there was a hermit, a poor sort of priest, who lived all alone, and had no society but his pig, with whom he used to eat at the same table as a sort of

penance for his sins. Besides the pig he had a box of money, which he had collected in little sums given in charity till it amounted to a good large sum, and this he kept hidden away under his bed. Now it happened that there were two bad men, two robbers, who heard of this box, and desired very much to get possession of it. So they put their heads together to construct a plan to deceive the poor old hermit. At last they hit upon one, and it was this: Having first got a good strong rope and a large basket, they went one night to his house, and climbed upon the roof without his knowledge, and let down the basket until it hung before the sill of his window. Both of them then began to sing—

“ Arise, arise, O hermit,  
And come up in the basket, O;  
The saints in glory ask it, O,  
Waiting in Paradise ! ”

The poor hermit, hearing these words, thought that the angels had come from heaven to bring him his reward. So up he jumped and opened the window, and when he saw the basket his joy was very great at the expectation of going in it up to Paradise. So after crossing himself devoutly, in he jumped, murmuring—

“ Lord, Lord ! I am not so good  
That I should get into a basket of wood.”<sup>1</sup>

Up the robbers then pulled him, until he was half-way to the roof, and then, fastening the rope round the chimney, down they ran, got into his room, plundered him of his money-box, and made off with themselves.

Meantime for a long space the hermit hung there, waiting and wondering why he had stopped, and praying with shut eyes ; but at last he grew impatient, for he did not go up,

<sup>1</sup> The original is a ludicrous mixture of Latin and Italian.

and the voices had ceased, and he wriggled about so much that the rope broke, and down he came to the ground, not without some severe bruises. But what was his indignation upon dragging himself up to his room to find his money-box gone, and only the pig remaining! However, he put the best face on it, said "*Pazienza!*" and prayed still more earnestly. Now the same two robbers, after having got possession of the box, began to think that they had been very great fools not to have taken the pig too, which they could sell at a good price at the fair. So they determined to try the same trick again in order to get the pig. Up they got therefore on the roof, and let down the basket as before, singing the same song, "*Arise, O hermit,*" etc. But this time the hermit was not to be taken in; and he answered to the robbers, whom he still thought to be angels, in verse which may thus be Englished—

“Go back, you blessed Angels,  
And let the good saints know  
That once they’ve come it over me,  
But a second time’s no go!”

• •



# *THE OLD LADY AND THE DEVIL.*

"The most perverse creature in the world is an obstinate old woman."

A CERTAIN aged lady was desirous of eating figs, and went out into her garden, intending to knock down a few with a long pole; but finding herself unable to do this, in spite of her infirmities she began climbing the tree to pick them, and did not even take off her slippers. At this juncture the Devil, in human shape, happened to pass by, and thinking that the old lady was about to fall, said to her, "My good woman, if you wish to climb a tree to gather figs, you should at least remove your slippers, otherwise you will most assuredly fall and break your bones." To this the old lady replied angrily, "My good sir, it does not matter to you whether I climb the tree with slippers or without them; pray go about your business, that I may not say, to perdition!" So she went on climbing; but just as she was about to seize the branch on which the figs were, one of her slippers came off, and she fell to



the ground. Lying on the ground, she began to scream ; and when her family came to see what was the matter she would say nothing but "The Devil blinded me!—the Devil blinded me!" The Devil, who was not far off, went up to her, and hearing what she said, found it more than he could stand, and really blinded both her eyes, saying, "I warned you, and asked you not to climb the tree in slippers, telling you that you would fall, and in return for that you gave me a very rude answer. And now, instead of saying, 'If I had listened to that wayfarer I should not have fallen,' you say 'The Devil blinded me ;' and I, who am really the Devil, have blinded you in very truth. What's the good of blaming the cat when the mistress is mad?" So saying, the Devil vanished away, and the obstinate old woman was left without her eyesight.

# *THE SUITOR AND THE PICTURE.*

A CERTAIN man of Celento having come to Naples to attend to a law-suit, was forced to take a house; and in order to be near the Vicaria,<sup>1</sup> he took one close to the Convent of San Giovanni a Carbonara. In this house he found an old picture hanging on the wall, all black and grimed with smoke, to which, thinking it to represent some saint, he recommended himself most fervently every time he left the house, praying that he might be preserved from every misfortune, find a good lawyer, and gain his case. The first time he said his prayers before this picture, on returning home at night, he was attacked and beaten by thieves. On the next day he fell down the stairs and bruised himself all over; and on the third he was arrested and imprisoned for a theft which had been committed near



<sup>1</sup> The prison and court of justice.

his lodging. On coming out of prison he once more addressed his prayers to the unknown image for a good lawyer; but this petition, too, was granted the wrong way, for he fell into the hands of one who was the greatest scoundrel and blunderer that could be imagined. The poor Celentano, quite broken down by his troubles, redoubled his prayers to the smoky picture in hopes of at least gaining his law-suit; but after this last attempt, seeing that things were going from bad to worse, he came home, no longer able to contain himself. "Now," he said, "I want to see what the picture is which has gained me so many benefits from Heaven, and worked so many miracles in my favour." He therefore took it down from the wall, and, after having carefully cleaned it, perceived that it represented a lawyer in his robes. Whereat he cried, "Ah! thou accursed race! none other could have worked such miracles! A fine saint I had chosen as my protector!" And therewith he cut the picture in pieces and threw it into the fire.

A PEASANT of Chiaramonte,<sup>1</sup> returning home by moonlight, on his ass, with two panniers of fresh-plucked grapes, passed by a cypress-tree, on which an owl was sitting. The owl began to hoot and moan in so piteous a manner that it seemed as though he would moan out his very heart. Poor Vito (every Chiaramonte man is called Vito) was a fool, but he had a kind heart, and he was saddened by the moaning of the owl, thinking that perhaps he was hungry. So, overcome by compassion, he called out, "Owl of mine, dost thou want a bunch of grapes?" The owl went on hooting "*Cciù.*"<sup>2</sup> "How? Is one bunch not enough?—

<sup>1</sup> A town in the south of Sicily.

<sup>2</sup> This (pronounced in English spelling *chew*) is the local rendering of the owl's *tu-whoo*, and also the Sicilian and Calabrian dialectical form of *più*, which means *more*. The same joke is current, in a different form, in another part of Sicily, where an old church was haunted by

dost thou want two?" "Ccih." "Oh! how hungry thou must be!—dost want a basketful?" "Ccih." "But—holy Death! thou art insatiable!—perhaps thou wouldst like the whole pannier?" "Ccih!" "Go to the devil! I have a wife and children, and I cannot give thee everything!"

### NEWSPAPER HUMOUR.

DURING the recent elections there was a large popular demonstration at Bergamo, where the police mustered in great force to prevent a disturbance. A fiery-spirited youth, seeing a gentleman escorted by two policemen, made a sudden rush to deliver him from his captors. In vain the supposed victim protested that his generous interposition was quite uncalled for.

"Ah! Signore, I could not for a moment think of leaving you in the hands of these minions of injustice."

"Pray, sir, moderate yourself."

"Moderate myself? We are not Moderates; we are Progressists, we are!"

"I daresay, but I'll thank you all the same to let me alone."

"Not a bit of it; come on."

And the young fellow dragged the gentleman along in spite of his protests. At last, in order to escape from his inexorable liberator, he was compelled to inform him that he was Rizzi, the superintendent of police himself. Our young hero was let off with a gentle admonition.—*Fanfulla*.

A GENTLEMAN and his valet had been out to a party, where both of them indulged a little too freely. On returning home the valet got into his master's bed, mistaking it for owls, and a countryman, taking their lamentable cries for those of souls in purgatory, asked how many masses were required to set them free, and got the answer "*More*" to every number he suggested.

his own, and the master, not knowing what he did, lay down with his feet on the pillow and his head to the foot of the bed (in the same bed). In the middle of the night one of them began to kick and awoke the other.

"Signor Padrone!" exclaimed the valet, "there's a scamp of a robber hiding in my bed!"

"You don't say so!" replied his master; "in that case there must be a pair of them, for I have got one here in my bed. You try and get rid of yours; I'll make short work with mine."

And seizing each other by the feet they rolled out of bed and alighted on the floor, where they fell asleep again, and did not discover the true state of affairs till they awoke the next morning.—*Gazzetta di Malta*.

AN old beggar, sitting near a church door, had a board suspended from his neck, inscribed: "Blind from my birth."

Another beggar, reading the inscription as he passed, was heard to remark—

"*Ebbene!* There's a chap who started young in business!"  
—*Il Mondo Umoristico*.

At a Socialist meeting a young orator inveighed furiously against the spread of education, saying that it would be far better for society if fewer people knew how to read and write.

"Why, you are an obscurantist!" exclaimed a progressist member of the audience.

"Oh, no; I am merely a post-office clerk."—*Il Cittadino*.

ALBERTO GELSOMINI has joined an amateur dramatic society. On the night of his first appearance in public he had only a small part assigned to him. All he had to say was—

"Signore, a gentleman of about fifty years has been some time in the anteroom; shall I show him in?"

Instead of which Gelsomini blurted out, excitedly—

“Signore, a gentleman has been waiting fifty years in the anteroom; shall I show him in?”—*Don Chisciotte*.

*Customer*. “Do you happen to have any pianoforte pieces?”

*New Apprentice*. “No, signore; we only sell whole pianos.”—*Il Cittadino*.

A POOR man in rags asked alms in a public thoroughfare. A gentleman gave him two soldi, and said—

“You might at least take off your hat when you beg.”

“Quite true; but then the policeman yonder might run me in for breaking the law; whereas, seeing us converse together, he will take us for a couple of friends.”—*Fanfulla*.

A YOUNG dramatic author took a play to the manager of a popular theatre. Months passed and no reply. Overcoming his natural shyness, he at length called for his manuscript. The *impresario* looked, but could not find it.

“Tell you what, my dear fellow, your paper is lost; now don’t get vexed, but” (pointing to a pile of documents on the table) “pick one out of that lot; they are every bit as good as your own.”—*Il Mondo Umoristico*.

A PHYSICIAN, already advanced in years, was asked what was the difference between a young doctor and an old one. He replied, “This is the only one of any importance: the young one turns red when he is offered his fee—the old one when the patient forgets to give it him.”

NALDINO was begging his father to get him a tin trumpet.

“No, I won’t,” said his father; “I don’t want to have my head split with your noise!”

“Oh no, papa!—I should only blow it when you were asleep.”

SPIPPOLETTI has been threatened with a duel.

He told us the story himself.

"I was trying to persuade him, when he threw one of his gloves at me, saying that he was going to wash it in my blood?"

"Good heavens!—and you?"

"Well . . . I told him the best way to clean kid gloves was with benzine!"

FASOLACCI is an elegant youth.

He had been spending right and left, so that he found himself unable to pay the bill at the hotel where he was lodging.

Taking his courage in both hands, and laying it before him on his writing-table, he determined to apply to his uncle—the well-known avarice of his father precluding all hope of assistance from *him*.

This was his letter :—

"DEAR UNCLE,—If you could see how I blush with shame while I am writing, you would pity me. Do you know why? . . . Because I have to ask you for a hundred francs, and do not know how to express my humble request. . . . No! it is impossible for me to tell you; I prefer to die!

"I send you this by a messenger, who will await your answer.

"Believe me, my dearest uncle, your most obedient and affectionate nephew,

"FASOLACCI."

"P.S.—Overcome with shame for what I have written, I have been running after the messenger, in order to take the letter from him, but I could not catch him up. Heaven grant that something may happen to stop him, or this letter may get lost!"

The uncle was naturally touched; he considered the matter fully, and then replied as follows :—



"MY BELOVED NEPHEW,—Console yourself, and blush no longer. Providence has heard your prayers.

"The messenger lost your letter.

"Good-bye.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"ARISTIPPO."

A BOOK-COLLECTOR has just purchased, at an exorbitant price, a volume which, except its rarity, has no value whatever.

"It is very dear," said a friend to him.

"Yes; but it is the only copy in existence."

"But if it should be reprinted?"

"Are you mad? Who'd be fool enough to buy it?"

AT A RESTAURANT.—*Customer* (ostentatiously sniffing at his plate): "I say, waiter, this fish isn't fresh!"

"Oh yes, it is, sir!"

"What?—I assure you it smells."

*Waiter* (mysteriously): "No, sir, you're mistaken; it's that other gentleman's cutlet!"

• A WORTHLESS poet showed Parini two sonnets he had written on the occasion of a wedding, asking him to read them both, and suggest which he should print. Parini read one, and restored it to the author, saying, "Print the other!" The poet tried to insist on his reading the second, but Parini would say nothing but "Print the other!"

SPIPPOLETTI'S son having reached an age when the heart is susceptible, fell in love with a pretty little milliner, and wrote to her declaring his eternal devotion. After filling four pages with passionate adjurations and orthographical mistakes, he concluded thus—

"I hope that my offers will be acceptable to you, and expect from you shortly an *affirmative* reply, *in which you will say either yes or no.*"

THE mother of a seminary student sent her son a new black soutane, with a letter in the pocket, which began thus—

“Dear Gigetto, look in the pocket of the soutane and you will find this letter. . . .”

AT a *café* some one asked, “Excuse me, sir; does the *Daily* appear every day?”

The grave man thus interrogated replied, in a solemn and professional manner, not without a sting of bitter irony: “Of course, sir. You might have seen that by the very title of the paper.”

“Then, sir, on your principle the *Century* should only appear once every hundred years.”

Collapse of the grave man.

THE other day Spippoletti received an anonymous post-card which informed him that he was an old imbecile. Thinking that he recognised the writing of a facetious friend, he hastened at once to the latter and asked him—

“Was it you that sent me this infamous libel?”

“No,” replied the other very calmly.

“Who could it be, then?” demanded Spippoletti.

“Why, my dear fellow, I am not the only man who knows you!”

SPIPPOLETTI’S wife, not having much confidence in the abilities of her servant, has been going to market herself. One day, approaching the fishwife’s stall, she asked the price of a large carp.

“Six francs.”

The lady examined the fish, and exclaimed—

“It’s not fresh!”

“I tell you it is!”

“But it’s quite flabby.”

"Oh! go on insulting it!" replied the fishwife bitterly.  
"It can't answer you!"

And with that kindness of heart which is natural to her, Signora Spippoletti bought the fish to make up for the injury to its feelings.

*A. to B.* The intelligence of animals is something extraordinary. For example, my dog Fido is a wonderfully clever fellow. When I am staying in the country I send him to the nearest village, and he executes all the commissions I give him better than any servant.

*B.* Well, I have seen stranger things than that in India. I knew an old elephant to whom they used to give orders for the next day's purchases every evening; and as his memory was not quite to be trusted, the intelligent animal always tied a knot in his trunk, so that he might be sure not to forget.

THE celebrated mathematician Plana, in examining students *viva voce*, was very fond of asking trivial and ridiculous questions, in order to test their nerve and readiness.

On one occasion he asked a young man, "What is the half of eight?"

The youth at first looked inclined to be offended, but speedily recovered his composure, and replied coolly, "Five!"

Baron Plana, cooler still, said, "Prove it!"

"Easily, sir," replied the student. "If you take one lemonade it costs eight sous; if you take half a one, you have to pay five."

As it could not be denied that such was then the price of lemonade at Turin, the candidate was passed.

—*Il Pappagallo.*

SIGNOR MERBI, the mayor of a small village, died while on a visit to the capital. His neighbours erected to his memory a stone with the following inscription:—

Here lies  
Marco Benedetto Giulio Merbi,  
Who died at Naples, and was buried there.

THERE are some people with a mania for suicide, and others with one for saving life. Within the last few days a mason at Rovigo threw himself under the wheels of a carriage. Death was imminent, when Ranchetti—this is the name of our rescuer—sprang in front of the horses, and saved the unfortunate workman at the risk of his own life.

The mason hastened home, shut the door of his house, and quietly hanged himself. But he had reckoned without his unknown rescuer. Ranchetti, foreseeing some fatal design, followed him, got into the room by breaking a window, cut the rope, called for help, and saved the would-be suicide a second time.

If this sort of thing goes on Ranchetti will have plenty to do.

A CERTAIN lawyer, in consequence of various political changes and his own merits, obtained the title of Count, and took office under Government.

“Why,” said an acquaintance one day, “do you not have your coat-of-arms painted on your carriage?”

“Because my carriage is older than my title,” he replied.

A SOLDIER in the Naples militia asked his captain for permission to go out for half-an-hour, which was refused. Somewhat later he renewed his request with the same result; and, after waiting some time, made a third application—still to no purpose. At last, at the fourth time of asking, permission was granted; the soldier went away, and was seen no more for two hours.

“How is this?” said the captain on his return. “You asked leave for half-an-hour.”

“That is true, sir—but I asked four times; and four half-hours make two hours, I think.”

As a diligence was passing along a part of the road reputed dangerous, some of the passengers expressed their fear of being attacked by robbers. “Do not be afraid,” said an Englishman, who was one of them; “I have foreseen everything—I have two loaded pistols at the bottom of my portmanteau.”

A NEAPOLITAN, paying a visit to Milan, said to a countryman of his who had settled there, “Before leaving this place, I should like to have my portrait done in oil.” “Impossible, my dear fellow!” said his friend; “here they do everything in butter.”

SO-AND-SO, who is in mourning for his mother, was one day riding out on a mare with a crimson saddle. A wag, meeting him, said, “That saddle does not look much like mourning.” “Excuse me,” replied our friend; “my mare’s mother is not dead—why should she go into black?”

A YOUNG man of these days, whose reputation is none of the best, was boasting in company of his skill as a physiognomist. “I have a thorough knowledge of rascals,” he said. “I can not only recognise them, but also thoroughly understand them, at first sight.” Hearing this, a respectable man, who was acquainted with him, said, “Did you ever look in the glass?”

A KNIGHT Commander of Malta, who was exceedingly avaricious, had two pages, who one day complained to him that they had no shirts to wear. The miser called his

major-domo, and said: "You will write to the steward of my estates in Sicily, and tell him to have some hemp sown at once. When the hemp is gathered, he is to have it spun, and then woven into cloth, to make shirts for these young men." At this the pages laughed. "Ah! the rogues!" said the knight; "see how delighted they are, now that they have their shirts."

A GENTLEMAN of Naples fought fourteen duels in order to maintain that Dante was a greater poet than Ariosto. The last of these encounters was fatal to the enthusiast, who exclaimed on his death-bed: "And yet I have never read either of them!"

AN actor, asking the manager for his arrears of payment, told him that he was in danger of dying of starvation. The manager, looking at his plump and ruddy countenance, told him that his face did not bear out the assertion. "Don't let yourself be misled by that," said the actor; "this face is not mine; it belongs to my landlady, who has been letting me live on credit for the last six months!"

GENNARO, of Naples, said one day to a friend, "I receive an immense number of anonymous letters, which are quite insulting; but I despise them too much to let it vex me. When I lower myself so far as to write anonymous letters, I always sign them."

FRANCESCO GALLINA, the lawyer, was disputing a point with his colleague, Giacomo Sancioti. Being unable to support his reasoning, he improvised a law which justified the position he took. Sancioti, perceiving this stratagem, immediately invented another which put Gallina in the wrong. The latter, never having heard of such a law, said, "Can you give me the reference?" "You will find it,"

replied Sanciotti, without hesitating, "on the same page as the Act you have just quoted."

A COUNTRYMAN attending church at a distance from his own village, was observed to sit unmoved through a sermon which affected the whole congregation to tears. The priest, thinking him a hardened sinner, singled him out for a personal address.

"Are you the only one to remain unshaken? Do you alone hear nothing?"

"Sir," replied the peasant, "I don't belong to this parish!"

A LITERARY man recently applied to a journalistic friend, asking him to get him work and make him known to the public. "My dear fellow," replied the friend, "in order to get work and become known you must publish."

The author hastened with a volume of MS. to a publisher, and asked him to print it.

"My dear sir, if you want to publish, you ought to become known first."

Now what is he to do?

OUR Paris correspondent, reporting a Socialist meeting, says, "The orator made use of a set of commonplace catch-words and high-sounding phrases, calculated to make a profound impression on the fools who attend similar gatherings. I was present . . ."

A candid confession!

*Recruit (to Corporal).* If I told you you were an ass, what would you do, sir?

*Corporal.* I should put you under arrest.

*Rec.* And if I only thought it?

*Corp.* Then I could do nothing, for thoughts are not seen, and cannot be brought up in evidence.

*Rec.* Then I *do* think so.

AT THE CLUB.—*A.* Have you seen our friend Bortoletti lately?

*B.* Yes.

*A.* Then you must have noticed that he dyes his hair in front, and has forgotten to do so at the back.

*B.* Well—that only proves that if he deceives himself he has no wish to deceive others.

*Mistress.* Rosa, did you count the silver last night?

*Rosa.* Yes'm—there's a fork and spoon wanting.

*Mis.* Do you know where they are?

*Rosa.* Yes'm.

*Mis.* Well—where are they?

*Rosa.* Under the kitchen table. You can find them there when they are wanted.

A BEREAVED widower had ordered a bust of his late wife, and called on the sculptor to inspect the work. “If you want any alterations,” said the artist, “it is only in the clay, you see, and can easily be retouched.

The widower gazed at it sadly.

“It is just like her . . . the nose rather large . . . a sure indication of kindness and benevolence. . . .”

Then bursting into tears—

“She was *so* good ! . . . Can't you make her nose a *great deal* longer ? ”

A FEW days ago there appeared on the last page of a newspaper the following advertisement :—

“RED NOSES.—Instant cure. Apply, enclosing P.O. for two francs, to Signor Dulcamara.”



A worthy citizen, whose nose was "ruddier than the cherry," hoping to get rid of his affliction, immediately sent in his address and the two francs.

Two days later he received a post-card—

"Go on drinking till your nose turns blue!"

"JOHN, take this cup away; the beef-tea is cold!"

"Cold? sir; oh, no! that's just a fancy of yours, sir; it's quite hot still, for I tried it, sir?"

"What! You dared to taste——"

"Oh no, sir; I only dipped my finger into it!"

AT THE POLICE COURT.—*President*: "What! you here again? You are perfectly incorrigible. You see, now, what bad company leads to."

*Prisoner*: "Oh! sir, how can you say that? Why, I never see any one but policemen and magistrates."

A PARVENU, in giving an invitation to dinner to a celebrated violinist who had just given a concert at the house of a banker, said to him, with pretended carelessness—

"Oh! by-the-bye—you will bring your violin, won't you?"

"Thank you," replied the artist, "but my violin never dines out."

AN old and knowing lawyer in the provinces, while waiting for the court to open, fell into conversation with another lawyer, equally old and knowing, who said to him—

"Who can that Fra Diavolo<sup>1</sup> be whose name occurs so often under the heading, 'The Milan theatres'?"

"Oh!" replied the first, with perfect seriousness, "he was a Terracina lawyer."

A PROVINCIAL householder returned from a shooting expedition in the marshes, wet to the skin. Entering the

<sup>1</sup> The famous brigand chief.

house, he called out, with chattering teeth, to his wife, "Get the fire lit at once!" The latter, after going to the window and looking at the neighbours' chimneys, replied—"No, indeed!—No one else has a fire lit, and I do not wish to make myself the subject of remark!"

DURING dinner, at the Castle, the tutor was being questioned about the progress made by the heir-presumptive to the coronet.

"Just now we are working at natural science. Our noble pupil is making rapid progress in chemistry."

"Is he learning about dynamite?" asked the Marchioness quickly.

"Not yet, madam ;—dynamite comes under the head of political economy."

AT A CHARITY CONCERT.—(*The pianist is playing horribly out of tune.*)—"What is that brute doing? I understand that it is a charity concert, but—all the same——"

"Why, that is just the reason he does not let his left hand know what his right is doing!"

AT THE MANŒUVRES.—*Captain*: I want all the corporals, without exception, to give the word of command together, and distinctly.

A moment after there is a general and vigorous shout of "Shoulder arms!"

*Captain (furiously)*. I hear several corporals saying nothing at all!

This must be the same officer who said, the other day—"In Company B, I see a man who is not there!"

"Look here," said the tenor, "I have sung in all the operas, and have always taken the principal parts—in *Robert le Diable* I was Robert; in *Hernani*, Hernani——"

“And in the *Siege of Corinth*?”

“Why, Corinth, of course!”

WHAT is a Secret Society?

A Secret Society is a greater or less number of individuals who meet from time to time in the most secret way possible, in order to shout their secrets in each other's ears at the top of their voices.

FORCE OF HABIT.—A well-known artist suffers horribly from corns on his feet. His toes, moreover, are deplorably sensitive, so that he calls out if they are scarcely touched.

It has gone so far that, when he steps on his own boots, which he has put out to be cleaned, he imagines that his feet are inside, and yells like one possessed.

“Ah-h-h!—body of a rhinoceros!!—look out! Where are you going?”

A PRETENDED pilgrim, tramping about the country, sells little pieces of stuff, which, according to him, once formed part of the cloak of St. Martin.

“What are they good for?” asked a rustic, one day.

“They will keep out the cold,” replied the pilgrim, and salved his conscience by adding, aside—

“Taken in large quantities.”

At a country inn an English traveller ordered hare for dinner.

“Give him some hare,” said the landlady to her husband, without hesitation.

“You know we have none,” replied he, in an undertone.

The wife answered, quite undisturbed—

“Give him some rabbit then. He's an Englishman—he'll never know the difference.”

A CLEVER man, who suffers from absence of mind, said to a friend—

“Oh!—So-and-so?—He died in September, and I have not seen him since!”

It is said that a rich Frenchman who was insane came to Milan, and after two days recovered his reason.

Some people may think this surprising. We do not.

It is quite natural that, in a city where so many lose their wits, one man should find some.

A TELEGRAM received from Lisbon informs us that “a terrible cyclone has completely destroyed Manilla.”

A few hours later another despatch arrived—“The cholera has entirely ceased in Manilla.”

We have no hesitation in believing it. Surely, if Manilla no longer exists, everything, the cholera included, must have ceased there.

FILIPPO made a valuable confession the other day. Talking of marionettes, he said, “I must acknowledge I have a great liking for this kind of spectacle.”

Bravo, Filippo! Family affection is a sacred thing!

SOME time ago the Government came to the decision of having the *Official Gazette* printed by convicts, in order, it is said, not to introduce an alien element.

Now that the secret has transpired, the resolution has been rescinded, and the convicts will no longer do the printing.

This second resolution has been explained by saying that the Government wishes to give no cause for accusations of family favouritism. We are quite willing to accept both excuses.

IN the Naples police-court a witness was once asked where he lived.

“With Gennaro.”

“And where does Gennaro live?”

“With me.”

“But where do you and Gennaro live?”

“Together.”

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## NOTES.

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NOTE 1, p. 48.—This line is printed in the edition of 1825 (I am not aware whether there is any other) as “An old stony Giggiano,” which does not make sense, as there appears to be no such word as “Giggiano” in Italian, except a proper name, applied to a district in Tuscany. The emendation I have ventured upon gives the sense correctly. The literal translation of the last six lines is—“Or of that which, vermillion and brilliant, makes proud the Aretine who grows it on Tregonzano, and amid the stones of Giggiano.” Leigh Hunt seems to have sent the MS. of his translation from Florence, in January 1825, to London, where it was published for him by his brother; so that it is probable the proofs were not revised by the author.

NOTE 1A, p. 77.—A full description of Stenterello and the other comic masks, with pictures of the principal ones, may be found in J. A. Symonds’ *Memoirs of Count Carlo Gozzi* (Introduction). See also Introduction to the present volume, p. xv.

NOTE 2, p. 137.—Professor Th. Trede, in his recently published work, *Das Heidentum in der römischen Kirche*, says that Modica, in the south of Sicily, is divided into two rival camps, devoted respectively to the worship of St. Peter and St. George. The festivals of these two saints give rise to scenes more suggestive of Donnybrook Fair than anything else. Similar conflicts between rival cities are by no means rare in the Neapolitan territory. (Trede, *op. cit.*, ii. 260.)

NOTE 3, p. 143.—“In the south of Italy, the birth of a girl is by no means considered a particularly joyful event. The birth of a boy is followed by rejoicings and festivities—no notice is taken of a girl. Of the thousands of infants annually received into the Naples foundling hospital, the boys only remain there a short time. They are soon adopted by families who have lost a child, but it is very seldom that any one thinks of taking a girl from the hospital. In Santa Lucia, when a boy is born, the whole quarter is thrown into the greatest excitement; he is handed round to all the *comari*, friends and neighbours—kissed, squeezed, pinched, out of sheer love and delight. But a girl-baby lies unnoticed in the clothes-basket, which serves as a cradle, and is neither kissed nor admired. At baptism a boy is always carried to church on the nurse’s right arm—a girl on the left.” (Trede, *Das Heidentum in der römischen Kirche*, iii. p. 299.)

NOTE 4, p. 169. — Small birds of all kinds—thrushes, larks, sparrows, bullfinches, even nightingales—are looked upon as fair game in Italy, and caught wholesale in clap-nets for the table.

NOTE 5, p. 209. — The confraternities frequently mentioned in stories depicting Italian life may need a word of explanation. When the scene of the story is in Tuscany, the confraternity meant is that of the *Misericordia* (the “Chaplan of the Misericordia” figures in Pratesi’s sketch of “Doctor Phœbus”), whose business it is to bury the indigent dead, and attend what in England would be pauper funerals. The procession of ghastly black figures, their heads and faces covered by hoods with eye-holes cut in them, is familiar to every one who has spent any time in an Italian town. The following account of their origin is taken from Mrs. Oliphant’s *Makers of Florence*:—“This still active and numerous society was established in the thirteenth century by an honest porter, one Pietro Borsi, who had the fine inspiration of at once reforming the vices and employing the idle moments of his brother porters, hanging on waiting for work in the Piazza of San Giovanni, by a most characteristic and appropriate charity. He persuaded them to fine each other for swearing, a mutual tax, half humorous, half pious, which pleased the rough fellows; then induced them to buy litters with the money thus collected, and to give, each in his turn, a cast of his trade to the service of the sick and wounded, carrying the victims of accident or disease to the hospitals, and the dead to their burial. In so warlike a city as Florence, amid all the disturbances of the thirteenth century, no doubt they had occupation enough, and this spontaneous good work, devised by the people for the people, marks one of the finest and most characteristic features of the charity of the Middle Ages. The institution grew, as might be expected, developing into greater formality and more extended operations, but always retaining the same object. There are no longer street frays in Florence, to make the charitable succour of the Misericordia a thing of hourly necessity, and the litters are no longer carried by the rough, homely hands of labouring men snatching a moment for charity out of their hard day’s labours. It is said that all classes, up to the very highest, form part of the society nowadays; called by their bell when their services are wanted, in all the districts of the city, prince and artisan taking their turns alike, and it may be together, but with this modification—and with the one addition to its aims, that the Brothers often nurse as well as carry the sick—the porters’ original undertaking is carried out with a firm faithfulness at once to tradition and Christian charity. The dress is in reality no sign of mysterious shame and expiation, but merely a precaution against any trafficking on the part of the brethren in the gratitude of their patients, from whom they are allowed to receive nothing more than a draught of water, the first and cheapest of necessities.”<sup>1</sup> The following, from Story’s *Roba di Roma*, may also be interesting:—“The admirable institution of the *Misericordia*, which is to be found throughout Tuscany, does not exist in Rome; but several of the confraternities attend to the duties of

burying their own dead, and one of them, called the *Arciconfraternita della Morte e dell' Orazione*, assumes the duty of burying the bodies of all poor persons found dead in the Campagna, or in the city. This confraternity was founded in 1551 by a Siennese priest, Crescenzo Selva, and confirmed by Pius IV. in 1560. . . . It is composed of most respectable persons, who wear a *sacco* of black, coarse linen. Upon information being received that a dead body has been found on the Campagna, notice of the fact is at once given to a certain number of the brethren, who, without delay, meet at the oratory, where they assume the black sack, and set out without delay in search of the corpse. Day or night, cold or wet, calm or storm, make no difference; the moment the news is received they set off on their pious expedition. Nor is this duty always a light one, for sometimes they are obliged to journey in search of the body more than twenty miles; and, under the pontificate of Clement VIII., when there was a great inundation of the Tiber, they reclaimed bodies which had been borne down by the current as far as Ostia and Fiumicino. They carry with them the bier, upon which they place the body when it is found, and bring it back on their shoulders to the city. Besides this duty on the Campagna, they also, in common with certain other confraternities, bury the bodies of the dead found in the city, where families are without means. The *Mandataro* informs the brethren where their services are needed, and, towards evening, dressed in thin black sacks, their heads and faces covered, and with only two holes cut in the *cappuccio* to look through, they may be seen passing through the street, bearing the body on their bier to the church, preceded by a long, narrow standard of black, on which are worked a cross, skull, and bones, bearing torches and chanting the *Miserere* and other psalms."

NOTE 6, p. 223.—The Roman Catholic clergy are forbidden to smoke, but allowed to take snuff. The point of this sentence is fully brought out, a page or two later on, by the friar's indignant denunciations of eating meat in Lent.

NOTE 7, p. 230.—"Come, I will show you Lucca," is said in joke to children, the person addressing them seizing and lifting them by the neck. The saying is probably connected with the idiom, "I shall see you again at Lucca"—i.e., ironically, "I shall never see you again;" so that "seeing Lucca" = "seeing nothing." Tommaseo and Bellini (*Dizionario*) suggest that the expression may refer to the fact that the Lucchese were great travellers.



## BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX OF WRITERS.

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EDMONDO DE AMICIS, born in 1846 at Oneglia (on the Genoa coast), was educated at Cuneo, Turin, and the Military College of Modena, which he left, with the grade of sub-lieutenant, in 1865. In 1866 he was present at the battle of Custozza, and in 1867 edited a military periodical at Florence. After the Italian occupation of Rome in 1870 he left the army, and devoted himself entirely to literature. He is in a certain sense a follower of Manzoni, who encouraged and directed his early efforts. His "Sketches of Military Life" (one of which is translated in the present collection) first saw the light in the pages of the *Italia Militare*, and were followed by a collection of *Novelle* (or short stories), which, however, are inferior to the first-named work. The construction is defective, and the characterisation, though vivacious, not very deep or subtle. Another fault which De Amicis frequently falls into is a certain straining after pathos, which defeats its own object—a fault which Dickens, in his desire to draw tears, was not always exempt from. This is perhaps most apparent in his later works, of which *Cuore* and another depicting the life (a most wretched one, if De Amicis is to be believed) of an Italian elementary schoolmaster, are examples. He has travelled extensively, and given to the world several lively and humorous volumes recording his experiences in Holland, Spain, Morocco, and elsewhere—besides being well known as a lecturer. We understand he is now resident at Turin, and has, quite recently, proclaimed himself a convert to Socialistic ideas. (Page 199.)

LODOVICO ARIOSTO was born at Reggio (near Modena, not to be confused with Reggio in Calabria) in 1474. He has written his own autobiography in the *Satires*. He studied law at Padua, but never had any taste for that profession, and never practised it. In 1503 he entered the service of the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, who employed him on various diplomatic missions, but left him leisure to continue his studies. In 1516 he published his great poem, the *Orlando Furioso*, which he had spent ten years in writing. After the death of his patron in 1520, Ariosto transferred his services to the cardinal's brother, Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara, who, in 1522, appointed him governor of the mountainous district of Garfagnana, near Lucca—a post he has humorously described in his *Satires*. In 1524 he returned to Ferrara, and spent the rest of his life in

lettered leisure at Alfonso's court. He now wrote his five blank verse comedies (*La Cassaria*, *I Suppositi*, *La Lena*, *Il Negromante*, and *La Scolastica*), which were acted before the court in a theatre built for the purpose by order of the Duke. He died in 1533 of a lingering illness. He was never married. The *Orlando Furioso*, says one writer, "has been translated into most European languages, but seldom successfully. Of the English translations, that by Harrington is spirited, and much superior to Hook's, but Rose's is considered the best, and is generally faithful." A specimen from the *Satires* has been given in T. H. Croker's version. Of the *Orlando Furioso*, it has been thought best, after consideration, to give a free prose translation (selected and slightly adapted from *Stories from Ariosto*, by H. C. Hollway-Calthrop<sup>1</sup>) of the passage describing Astolfo's visit to the moon, which is one of the best for exhibiting the humorous side of Ariosto's genius. The poem is a gigantic one, with legions of characters, and a perfect maze of episodes more or less closely connected with the main thread of the story: the war between Charlemagne and the Saracens, ending with the defeat of the latter and the death of their king, Agramante. If those who are in at the death of Spenser's Blatant Beast are very few and very weary, we should imagine that those who have followed Agramante to his bitter end must be fewer and wearier still. (Page 30.)

FRANCESCO BERNI, a Tuscan, was born in 1490, and died in 1536 as canon of the cathedral at Florence. He was a priest, and spent the greater part of his life at the court of Rome, in the service of various cardinals and prelates. A writer in the *National Encyclopædia* says, "Berni is one of the principal writers of Italian jocose poetry, which has ever since retained the name of *Poesia Bernesca*. This style had been introduced before him" (see Note on *Pucci*), "but Berni carried it to a degree of perfection which has rarely been equalled since. . . . His satire is generally of the milder sort, but at times it rises to a bitter strain of invective. His humour may be said to be untranslatable, for it depends on the genius of the Italian language, the constitution of the Italian mind, and the habits and associations of the Italian people. His language is choice Tuscan. The worst feature in Berni's humorous poems is his frequent licentious allusions and equivocations, which, though clothed in decent language, are well understood by Italian readers." It is, perhaps, curious that another great offender in this respect—Casti—was also an ecclesiastic. But we cannot help remembering in this connection a remark made by a writer in an English magazine, who had been invited to a wedding in an Italian country town—viz., that of the congratulatory verses sent in by friends (some of which were very far from being in accordance with our notions of propriety) the most objectionable were written by priests. Three volumes of Berni's *Poesie Burlesche* were collected and published after his death. He also wrote what he called a *ri-*

<sup>1</sup> Macmillan & Co., 1882.

*facimento* of Bojardo's *Orlando Innamorata*, altering the diction of the poem into what he considered purer Italian, and adding some stanzas of his own. More satisfactory productions, perhaps, are *La Catrina* and *Il Migliazzo*, dramatic scenes written in the rustic dialect of Tuscany. (Page 35.)

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO was born at Paris in 1313. His father, a native of Certaldo, near Florence, brought him to the latter city when quite a child, intending to educate him for commerce, in which he was himself engaged. He escaped from this life at the age of twenty by promising to study canonical law, which, however, proved not much more to his taste than business, and his principal pursuits at the University of Naples were Greek (then beginning to be studied in Italy), Latin, and mathematics. At Naples, too, he made the acquaintance of Petrarch, and fell in love with the Princess Maria, a natural daughter of King Robert, for whom he wrote his poem of the *Teseide*, containing the tale of "Palaemon and Arcite," afterwards made use of by Chaucer. In 1350 Boccaccio returned to Florence, and appears to have gradually changed his way of life, and become known as a quiet and orderly citizen. In 1361 he retired from the world altogether, and became a priest. He visited Petrarch at Milan, and again (in 1363) at Venice, and kept up his friendship with him to the end of his life. In 1373 he was appointed by the Republic of Florence to give public readings, with comments, of Dante's *Divina Commedia*; but these lectures were often interrupted by ill-health, and Boccaccio died in December 1375. His earliest work was in verse, but finding that he could not hope to attain first-rate excellence in poetry he turned his attention chiefly to prose. The *Decameron* was one of the earliest prose works written in Italian, and is esteemed a classic for its style. The plan, perhaps, suggested that of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*; the hundred tales of which it consists being supposed to be told by ten persons on ten different days—hence the name (from the Greek words for *ten days*). The introduction relates how the narrators—seven ladies and three knights—having fled to the country to escape from the plague which desolated Florence in 1348, enlivened the solitude of their villa by telling stories. Some of these tales are lively and humorous, some pathetic and tragic. Many of them, as is well known, are better left in oblivion; some, indeed, being good comedy spoilt by that which renders it unquotable; while others, if ever they were found amusing, must have been so by reason of their coarseness, for they have no other claim. Others, again, reach a very high level, as that of "Nathan and Mithridanes"; or that other of the three rings, on which Lessing founded his drama of *Nathan der Weise*. The story of "Calandrino and the Heliotrope" is, we believe, one of the best farcical ones. Buffalmacco and his practical jokes seem to have been the common property of the comic writers of the period, and probably all "*burle*" or "japes" which were thought more than commonly amusing were indiscriminately fathered upon him. His real life is

given by Vasari, from whom we have also culled one or two of the more celebrated *burle*, which, however, belonging to popular tradition, had previously been related by Sacchetti. In the same way, at a later period, every witty saying and ridiculous adventure current in Florence was attributed to the dramatist G. B. Fagiuoli (1660-1742). Anecdotes of the latter may be picked up among the Florentine populace even now; but the practical joke related of him (we hope falsely) in Pitre's collection of folk-tales will not bear repetition. Other Joe Millers of Italy are the Florentine Piovano Arlotto, Gonnella, and Barlacchia, various collections of whose jests have from time to time been published. The translation given (as also in the case of the selections from Parabosco and Sabadino degli Arienti) is Thomas Roscoe's. (*Page 2.*)

LUIGI CAPUANA, Sicilian novelist and critic, born at Mineo, in the province of Catania, May 27, 1839. His first published works were poems, among others an imitation of Tommy Moore's *Loves of the Angels*. In 1864 he went to Florence, where he was for two years dramatic critic to *La Nazione*. The best of the articles written for that paper he afterwards published in volume form, under the title, *Teatro italiano Contemporaneo*. In 1868 he returned to his native place, and remained there till 1876. During this time he was chosen Syndic of the district, and in 1875 published an official report on *The Commune of Mineo*, which is really worthy of the name of a contribution to literature. In 1877 he removed to Milan, and resumed his literary labours, writing critical articles in the *Corriere delle Sera*, and also a number of sketches, afterwards collected in volume form, under the title, *Profili di donne*. Since then he has issued various works of fiction, mostly collections of short stories—or rather character-sketches—for some of them have scarcely any story to speak of. The specimens in the present volume are taken from a collection entitled *Fumando*. Capuana is a great admirer of Émile Zola, and aims at his style and methods; but his Italian (or perhaps Greek, since he is a Sicilian!) sense of beauty and proportion preserve him from the grossest faults of the extreme naturalist school. He needs, however, to guard against the dangers of Impressionism; at least we suppose that is the name for the tendency to give detached “bits” instead of pictures—a tendency which appears to excess in his short stories. He has written two complete novels, *Giacinta*, and *Storia Fosca*; and a charming collection of popular fairy tales, retold for children under the title of *C'era una volta* (“Once upon a time”). (*Page 107.*)

ENRICO CASTELNUOVO, born at Florence, 1839, has passed the greater part of his life at Venice, where he appears to be still resident. From 1853 to 1870 he was engaged in business, but in the latter year became editor of a political paper, *La Stampa*. Since then he has published several novels and collections of short stories, some of which have appeared in the *Perseveranza*. Some

of the best known of them are: *La Casa Bianca, Vittorina, Lauretta* (1876), *Il Professôr Romualdo* (1878), *Nuovi Racconti, Alla Finestra, and Sorrisi e Lacrime*, from which the sketch in the present volume is taken. Most of his stories deal with Venetian life. (Page 191.)

GIOVANNI BATTISTA CASTI, 1721-1803, was an ecclesiastic, and the author of many satirical works, of which the best known is *Gli Animali Parlanti* (The Speaking Animals), which has, I believe, been translated as *The Court and Parliament of Beasts*. He also wrote a sequence of a hundred sonnets, entitled *I Tre Giuli*, which is surely the most striking instance extant of an idea ridden to death. The sonnets (of which one here and there is fairly amusing) are all on the subject of a debt of about eighteenpence which the author owed a friend. They hardly merit the extremely laudatory language used about them by the translator, M. Montague (1841). A much greater contribution to the gaiety of nations is the "opera buffa" of *Il Re Teodoro*, for which Paisiello wrote the music, and from which we have given an extract. Casti wrote other comic operas, one of the best of which is *Catiline's Conspiracy*, in which the famous exordium of Cicero's oration, *Quousque tandem*, is rendered (and pretty closely too) into burlesque verse. Cicero is shown in his study, preparing his oration with infinite pains. When at length it is delivered, the interruptions of Catiline and others are faithfully reported.

<i>Cicero.</i>	Fin a quando, o Catilina L'esterminio e la rovina Contro a noi mediterai? Fino a quando abuserai Con cotesta impertinenza Della nostra pazienza? Va, rubello, evadi, espatria, Traditore, della patria, Conciofossecosachè . . .
<i>Catil.</i>	Traditor rubello a me?
<i>Cic.</i>	Conciofossecosachè.
<i>People.</i>	Si ch'è ver . . .
<i>Others.</i>	No chè non è !
<i>Cic.</i>	Conciofossecosachè . . .

This is pretty good fooling, and the compound conjunction (a sort of double-barrelled *Forasmuch as*, often used in legal phraseology), to which the orator clings desperately, when so rudely thrown out in his speech, comes in with the happiest effect. But the effect of the rapid rush of the double-rhymed octo-syllables would be quite lost in a translation. They have somewhat the character of the smart and fluent verse in Mr. W. S. Gilbert's operas. Besides verse, Casti wrote prose *Novelle*, to which Cantù (*Letteratura Italiana*, vol. ii.) gives the worst character. Of the

*Animali Parlanti*, the same author says that it "satirised Governments with the liberalism of the *café*" (as we might say "of tap-room politicians") "and in the style of an *improvisatore*." It is a somewhat long-winded work in six-line stanzas. (Page 57.)

BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE, born in the Mantuan territory in 1478, was attached, first to the court of Lodovico the Moor, at Milan; afterwards, in succession to those of Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, and Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino. He was a polished gentleman and brilliant scholar, "a perfect knight, second to none either in intellect or culture." Charles V. pronounced him "one of the best knights in the world." The court of Urbino, at that time "a school of courtesy and valour, as well as of learning," was a fitting home for such a man. He took part in more than one campaign, and was sent as ambassador to England, to Milan, and to Rome. He died at Toledo in 1529, while on a diplomatic mission to the Emperor Charles V., it is said, of grief at the sack of Rome by the Spaniards under the Constable de Bourbon. Raphael painted his portrait in life; Guido Romano designed his tomb after his death, and Pietro Bembo wrote his epitaph. He wrote many elegant and scholarly poems, both in Latin and Italian; but his fame as an author rests entirely on the book entitled *Il Cortigiano* (The Courtier). It consists of a series of dialogues in which the qualities necessary to the character of a perfect courtier are discussed. It seems to have been written at Mantua, during the short period of his happy wedded life (his wife, Ippolita Torelli, married in 1516, died three years later). The style is courtly and polished, though with a certain simplicity in its stateliness. The interlocutors sometimes relieve their grave philosophy by humorous anecdotes, of which a few specimens are given in the text. (Page 27.)

FRANCESCO CERLONE lived during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and wrote an immense number of plays of the *Commedia dell'Arte* type. His works were published, in a collected form, at Bologna in 1787, and again (in twenty-two volumes) at Naples, in 1825-29. Little seems to be known about him. Symonds calls him "a plebeian poet of Naples." The distinguished Italian critic, Michele Scherillo, "discovered" him not many years ago. (Page 49.)

C. COLLODI is the pseudonym of a brilliant Tuscan writer, Carlo Lorenzini, a frequent contributor to *Fanfulla*. He was for some time theatrical censor to the Prefecture of Florence. He has also written children's books, and one or more volumes of short stories. (Page 90.)

NAPOLIONE CORAZZINI, born in Tuscany about 1840, had a natural bent towards humorous writing, but was prevented by circumstances from following it out, though a farce (or rather parody) of his,

called *The Duel*, is sometimes acted. He spent some time in Herzegovina as a newspaper correspondent, but was forced, on his return, to forsake literature for commerce. (Page 103.)

PAOLO FERRARI, writer of comedies, was born at Modena in 1822. His father was an official in the service of the Duke, and young Ferrari's liberal sentiments were a great disadvantage to him at the outset of his career. It is even said (with what truth I do not know) that they induced the Duke to interfere with the granting of his University degree, which was delayed for a long time. But Ferrari's legal studies had been pursued with so little ardour as to suggest another reason for the action of the University authorities. His first comedy was written in 1847, and was called *Bartolommeo the Shoemaker*, a title afterwards changed to *Uncle Venanzio's Codicil*. After contending with many difficulties, he wrote his *Goldoni* in 1852, but had to wait two years before it was produced, when it was a signal success. Since then he has given to the world a long series of works, chiefly comedies, and the Italians consider him their first comic dramatist. Some of his greatest successes are his dramas, drawn from Italian history, in which the characters—unlike those in the ordinary historical drama—are rather literary than political. Such are *Dante a Verona*, *Parini e la Satira*, and the above-mentioned *Goldoni e le sue Sedici Commedie*. He writes either in prose or in a kind of rhymed alexandrines called *Versi Martelliani*. Of his other dramas the greatest are *Il Duello*, *Il Suicidio*, *Gli amici rivali*, *Cause ed effetti*, *Il Ridicolo*, *Gli Uomini Serii*. Nearly all of his plays which are still on the stage have obtained the Government prize offered in Italy for dramatic excellence. (Page 237.)

PIERO FRANCESCO LEOPOLDO COCCOLUTO FERRIGNI, better known under the name of "Yorick," is a Tuscan writer; born at Leghorn in 1836, though of Neapolitan descent. He began his literary career in 1854 by contributing "correspondence" to some of the Florentine papers. In 1856 he first adopted the pseudonym which has become so famous—from Hamlet, not from Sterne. Indeed, when he became acquainted with the latter's works, he felt as if he had been guilty of presumption, and thenceforth signed his articles, *Yorick, son of Yorick*. He took a brilliant law degree at Siena in 1857, and has made his mark as an advocate, though his reputation is principally journalistic and literary. Florentine newsboys may be heard using his name to enhance the attractions of their wares. "C'è l'articolo di Yorick," they will say, or more briefly, "C'è Yorick!" (There's Yorick in it). Like many living Italian writers, he bore his part in the War of Liberation. He volunteered in 1859, when, for some time, he acted as Garibaldi's private secretary, and in 1860 he was wounded at Milazzo. He is a writer of great ease and fluency—and not in his own language only—sending contributions in French to the *Indépendance Italienne*, and in German to the *Neue Freie Presse*. He appears to be one



of the few Italians who have found literature profitable. Many of his newspaper articles have been collected in volume form. The specimens here quoted are taken from "Cronache dei Bagni di Mare" (part of which was reproduced in English by the *Morning Post*), and "Su e giù per Firenze." (*Page 232.*)

ANTONIO GHISLANZONI, son of a doctor at Lecco, on the Lake of Como, was born in 1824. His father first wished him to become a priest, and then sent him to study medicine at Pavia; but the youth, finding that he possessed a splendid baritone, studied singing instead, and in 1846 obtained an engagement at the Lodi Theatre. In 1848 he took to journalism, and ran two papers at Milan; the extreme political opinions advocated in which soon landed him in prison. After the return of the Austrians he was exiled, and, after another imprisonment in Corsica, continued his musical career there and in Paris, till he lost his voice (in 1854) in consequence of an attack of bronchitis, and returned to literature and Italy. He edited various papers, wrote a variety of articles, mostly of a comic character, and composed the *libretti* to several operas, of which the best known is Verdi's *Aida*. For some time past he has resided in a little house of his own at Lecco. He edited, and in great part wrote, the *Rivista Minima*, which afterwards passed into the hands of his friend, Salvatore Farina. (*Page 94.*)

GIUSEPPE GIUSTI, born at Monsummano, in Val di Nievole (Tuscany), in 1809. He received his early education, between the ages of seven and twelve, from a priest; its results being, to use his own words, "sundry canings, not a shadow of Latin, a few glimmerings of history, discouragement, irritation, weariness, and an inward conviction that I was good for nothing." He then attended a school in Florence, where he came under the care of more intelligent and sympathetic masters, and began to awaken to the love of knowledge. He afterwards went to the University of Pisa, but (like our own Wordsworth and others) made no special progress in the studies proper to the place. In later life he lamented the idleness and desultory habits of these years; but it is probable that, in following the bent of his intellect towards popular and general literature, and picking up songs and stories in the racy idiom of the Tuscan hills, he was laying the best possible foundation for his future career as a poet. His health was never good, and he died, comparatively young, in 1850, thus disappointing the brilliant expectations his friends had formed. What he did accomplish, however, is sufficient to secure him a place in the first rank of modern Italian literature. Besides the *Poems* (of which several collected editions have been published) his principal works are a collection of Tuscan proverbs (with introduction and notes) and a *Discourse on the Life and Works of Giuseppe Parini*, the satirist. Since his death there have been published a volume of his letters, and one of unpublished pieces in prose and verse, the principal of which is a commentary



on Dante's *Divina Commedia*. His poems are peculiarly difficult to translate, on account of their exceedingly idiomatic character, as well as, in many cases, of their personal and political bearing. They have a directness, vigour, and pungency rare in the literature of Italy during the first half of this century. His political satire rises sometimes into noble indignation, as in the fine poem beginning, *A noi, larve d'Italia*, which has been translated into English, if we mistake not, at least twice. His non-political satire is always kindly and good-humoured, and the same spirit, along with an irrepressible cheerfulness and boyish love of fun, comes out in his letters—especially those to his intimate friend, Manzoni. (*Page 74.*)

COUNT GASPARO GOZZI, elder brother of Carlo Gozzi, the dramatist, was a Venetian, and lived from 1713 to 1786. The Gozzi family might be described as that of "a penniless laird wi' a lang pedigree," and the *Memoirs of Count Carlo* contain a vivid account of the straits and shifts to which they were put. Gasparo hoped to retrieve the family circumstances by his marriage with a learned lady given to poetry, Luisa Bergalli or Bargagli (who rejoiced in the academic title of *Irminda Partenide*); but her extravagance and shiftlessness only made matters worse, and he was forced to do anonymous hack-work—translations from the French, and the like—for a living; or, as he calls it, to wear himself out "in unknown writings with the daily sweat of one's brow, and drag works—either insignificant or vile—out of the Gallic idiom into the Italian language." Notwithstanding this, he contrived to do a tolerable amount of work which has lasted. His style is simple, clear, and pure, though without much vigour; and, as Cantù says, he has the gift of "coupling fancy with observation, and wit with feeling." He issued for some time a paper called *L'Osservatore* on the plan of Addison's *Spectator*. He wrote a great many "Bernesque" poems—sonnets *a coda*, and satirical pieces in blank verse. His letters also are excellent. (*Page 53.*)

GIACOMO LEOPARDI, born at Recanati, in the Duchy of Urbino, in 1798, suffered all his life from ill-health and real or fancied uncongenial surroundings. He was heavily handicapped in the race of life, being hunchbacked, as well as constitutionally diseased; and thus the pessimistic doctrines which he imbibed from Pietro Giordani fell on a fertile soil. His father was rich and possessed a splendid library, and though he refused to allow Giacomo to go away to school, the boy threw himself into his studies at home with so much ardour that at fifteen he was a brilliant classical scholar, and wrote an ode in Greek which competent critics believed to be ancient. Yet he long remained unknown, thwarted by his father's harshness in all his efforts to obtain a wider culture and more literary opportunities. At last he was able to escape from his hated home to Rome, where he enjoyed the society of literary men; but could not succeed, as he had hoped, in obtaining

some professorship. He then, embittered and disgusted with the world, retired to Milan, where he lived in the house of a publisher and prepared his poems for the press. Here too he was unable to escape from the misery which pursued him, and his health became worse and worse. At last, in the autumn of 1831, he took his last journey—to Naples, where Antonio Ranieri, his untiring friend, received him into his house. There, worn out by dropsy and consumption, he died on July 14th, 1837. Of his philosophical works, and his splendid, gloomy verse, it is not the place to speak. I have included him in this collection on account of some of his dialogues, which are masterpieces of a subtle irony which has the air of simplicity and bites to the bone. It is keener and more delicate than Swift's, but otherwise very difficult to describe. One cannot easily imagine that Leopardi ever laughed; but no one could read the "First Hour and the Sun," or the "Wager of Prometheus," and think him wanting in humour. (Page 63.)

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI, a Florentine, lived from 1469 to 1527. His place in this volume is due to his comedy of *La Mandragola*, of which a scene is given; but this, of course, is not the work by which he is best known in history. Macaulay's well-known essay gives a very good summary of his political and literary labours. He first took part in public affairs in 1494; in 1498 he was elected Secretary to the Florentine Republic, an office which he resigned in 1512, after the return of the Medici. Some time afterwards, being suspected of a conspiracy against the latter, he was imprisoned and put to the torture, nearly dying under it. He was included in the amnesty proclaimed by Giovanni di Medici, when raised to the Papacy under the title of Leo X. Though restored to liberty, he could take no part in politics, and finding himself unable to serve Florence, and condemned to a hateful inaction, he retired to his country-house, where he wrote the greater part of his works. The last of these was the *History of Florence*, written at the request of Pope Clement VII., and completed in 1525. In 1519 Leo X. consulted him about reforming the government of Florence, but his advice was not followed. In 1526, when the Constable Bourbon began to threaten Tuscany and Rome, Clement VII. again consulted Machiavelli, and entrusted him with the fortification of Florence, and with the precautions to be taken for the safety of Rome; but these precautions came too late. The Pope was taken prisoner, and the Medici once more driven from Florence; and Machiavelli being now looked upon as a partisan of that family, fell into neglect, and may be said to have died of grief and disappointment. His chief works besides the *History*, are the *Prince*, the *Art of War*, and the *Discourses on the First Decade of Livy*. Besides this, he wrote two or three comedies and a witty *novella* (somewhat extravagant, though, in its satire), entitled *Belphegor*. It relates how one of the devils, taking the form of a man, came to earth in order to try the experi-

ment of matrimony; but was so very wretched in his married life, that, after a short trial, he preferred returning to the region whence he came. It is said that Machiavelli's experiences in his own home gave point to his descriptions of Madonna Onesta's folly and extravagance. The *Mandragola*, in spite of Macaulay's high praise, offers scarcely anything adapted for quotation. The play is admirably constructed, but the story is one which would render it "impossible" for a modern audience. We have been forced to confine ourselves to a soliloquy of Fra Timoteo's and one of the lyrical interludes between the acts, which has the merit of brevity, if no other. (*Page 26.*)

ALESSANDRO MANZONI, born at Milan 1784, died 1873. One of the leaders of the Romantic Movement in Italy, and the founder (in that country) of the historical novel in the style of Scott. The *Promessi Sposi*, published in 1827 (from which we have quoted a scene or two), has probably been translated into every European language. Less widely known are his tragedies, *Adelchi* and *Il Conte di Carmagnola*, and his *Odes* (1815), the most famous of which is that on the death of Napoleon—*Il Cinque Maggio*. He was followed in the department of historical fiction by his son-in-law, D'Azeglio, and by Grossi, Guerrazzi, Rosini, Ademollo, and others. Though at first sight *I Promessi Sposi* might seem anything but a humorous work, there are scenes equal in this respect to some of the best in Scott's novels. That of the attempted irregular marriage (which we have chosen for quotation) is especially good, and the character of Don Abbondio is comically conceived throughout. Perhaps the book has been somewhat neglected of late years—it has certainly, like many other masterpieces, suffered undeservedly through being used as a school-book. (*Page 82.*)

FILIPPO PANANTI was born at Ronta, in the district of Mugello (Tuscany), about 1776, and studied law at Pisa, but afterwards gave himself up entirely to literature. He went abroad in 1799, and after visiting France, Spain, and Holland, obtained a position as libretto-writer to the Italian Opera in London. When returning to Italy by sea he was taken prisoner by Algerine pirates, but liberated through the intervention of the English consul. "He then came to Florence, and published his works—viz., *Il Poeta di Teatro, Prose e Versi, Viaggio in Algeria*, in which it may be said that he is often negligent rather than simple, and that he makes use unnecessarily of foreign expressions, or of such as are not yet accepted as current in the conversation of the best educated persons; yet he pleases, nevertheless, and deserves to do so, by his vivid and racy way of expressing himself, and his ease and fluency. He died in 1837."—(AMBROSOLI.) *Il Poeta di Teatro* is a lively and amusing poem descriptive of the miseries endured by a poet of small means. It is thoroughly good-humoured throughout, and has no "Grub Street bitterness" about it. We have extracted one or two passages. (*Page 70.*)

GIROLAMO PARABOSCO, born at Piacenza about the beginning of the sixteenth century, died at Venice, 1557. He wrote "Rime" and prose comedies, and was, moreover, esteemed one of the best musicians of his time. He was for some time organist and choir-master at St. Mark's, Venice. But he is best known by *I Diporti*, a collection of stories after the model of Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, supposed to be told by a fowling-party weatherbound on an island in the Venetian lagoons. (Page 14.)

MARIO PRATESI, a Tuscan writer, was born at Santaflora, in the district of Monte Amiata, in 1842. At eighteen he became a clerk in a Government office, and remained at this distasteful employment till 1864, when he returned to his studies, and in 1872 obtained an appointment as lecturer on Italian literature at the Pavia Technical Institute, whence he passed to a similar post at Viterbo, and thence to Terni. Most of his stories, since collected in volume form, first appeared in the *Nuova Antologia*, and he has contributed to the *Diritto*, the *Rassegna Settimanale*, and the *Nazione* (Florence). He has also written poems. He is at his best when describing the scenery of his native mountains. Monte Amiata, it may be remembered, was the scene of the strange religious revival led by the insane peasant-preacher, David Lazzaretti, who was shot down by the gendarmes in August 1878. It is a wild, lonely region, lying between the river Ombrone and the Roman border—a land of craggy peaks and dark glens, inhabited by simple, serious-minded people with a touch of gloomy mysticism in their character, perhaps due to Etruscan ancestry. The immediate neighbourhood of the district where the tragedy took place is admirably described in "Sovana." Pratesi is intensely sympathetic in his manner of depicting life. He does not aim at an "objectivity" which seems to glory in appearing cold and heartless; but he does not dwell unnecessarily on his pathetic scenes. He relates them with grim brevity, and leaves them to produce their own effect. He has an eye for the ludicrous, but it does not predominate in his view of life; he never laughs, but he often smiles quietly, and sometimes grimly. *Dottor Febo* is a good example of his subtle irony, and has been given entire, as no detached passage would show to advantage. He is fully alive to the great evils of priestcraft and ignorance from which Italy has suffered in the past, but he is no radical of the type which is all negation and no affirmation. His attitude towards the clergy is impartial enough—he has drawn them of all sorts, good and bad. In the story before us there are three, and those who have resided any length of time in Italy must have met them all: the spiteful, hypocritical preaching friar, the jovial, easy-going *Arciprete* (who would have overlooked the sin of a bit of meat on Ash Wednesday if that meddling rascal of a Franciscan had not put his finger in the pie), and the chaplain of the *Confraternità*, in his threadbare coat,—own brother to Chaucer's Parson. Though in the stories here translated I have usually left all proper names in

their original form, I have in this instance departed from the rule, in order to bring out the quaint incongruity of the hero's name with his pitifully sordid life and surroundings, *Febo* not being perhaps readily recognisable at first sight as *Phæbus*. Names as classical as this are by no means uncommon in the Roman and Tuscan country districts. Romolo and its feminine Romola are frequently met with, as also Belisario, Ersilia, Flaminia, etc. Naples and the Adriatic coast show a greater preference for Church saints; and a peculiarity of the latter district is the frequent occurrence of Old Testament names, which are not usual in other parts. Perhaps this is due to Byzantine influence, and the more comprehensive calendar of the Eastern Church; thus we find Samuele, Zacchiale, Elia, etc. The subject of Christian names in rural Italy is an interesting one, and would well repay study, especially in villages where reading is almost unknown, and the names in use must be to a large extent traditional, and probably handed down from remote antiquity. (*Page 206.*)

“ANTONIO PUCCI, the son of a bell-founder, was a poet, although he kept a shop; and had not a little of that easy, sparkling vein which, a century later, was so abundant in Berni, as to make the latter seem like the creator of a new style of poetry. He died in Florence, his native city, some time after 1375.” This is all I can find with regard to Pucci in Ambrosoli's *Manual of Italian Literature*. The sonnet in which he describes the persecutions to which a poet is subject at the hands of his friends is a not unfavourable specimen of what the Italians call *poesia bernesca*. This kind of sonnet is called “sonetto *a coda*,” or “with a tail,” and is much used in humorous and satirical writing, as being a kind in which more licence is allowable metrically, when the idea cannot be brought within the limits of the strict sonnet form. The “tail” may be lengthened at pleasure, but always in sets of three lines—one short and two long—and sometimes attains to a greater length than the original sonnet. (*Page 1.*)

FRANCESCO REDI, born at Arezzo, in Tuscany, in 1626, was a jovial physician, no less famed for his wit than for his learning and medical skill. He studied philosophy and medicine at the University of Pisa, and was then invited to Rome by the princes of the House of Colonna, in whose palace he lectured on rhetoric. He was afterwards court physician to the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. During the last years of his life he was afflicted with epilepsy, and retired to Pisa, as being a healthier place than Florence. Here he died suddenly on March 1st, 1698. His published works consist of poems, scientific treatises, and a large collection of letters which show his wide learning, his shrewd sense, and the merry, genial spirit which could see a funny side to his own troubles. “To judge from the praises of his countrymen,” says Leigh Hunt, “he partook of the wit and learning of Arbuthnot, the science of Harvey, and the poetry and generosity of Garth.” His humour is

rather broad than subtle—but always sweet and kindly; his laughter is the mellow mirth of one who enjoys life himself and wishes others to enjoy it also. He was passionately fond of natural history, and an acute and patient observer; his papers on vipers, on the generation of insects, and on some other subjects, were important contributions to the science of his time. His replies (usually at great length) to the patients who consulted him by letter have been preserved, and are printed among his works. In medicine, he had a wholesome faith in the healing efficacy of nature, and anticipated the modern revolt against the excessive use of drugs, or, as he himself puts it, “that hotch-potch of physic which physicians, out of sheer perversity, are accustomed to prescribe to others, but would never dream of swallowing themselves.” His poems are not numerous, nor of the most elevated kind of poetry; but the best known, the dithyrambus of “Bacco in Toscana,” with its fiery swing and rush, leap, and lilt of melody, is perhaps the most perfect thing of its kind ever done. It awakened the enthusiasm of Leigh Hunt, from whose translation we have extracted a passage, and whose critically appreciative introduction is quoted below. “Bacco in Toscana” is not a poem to be looked on with favour by total abstainers; but wine of Montepulciano is not the most pernicious form of alcohol known to the world (the wine on which the German cavalier in the ballad drank himself to death was that of Montefiascone, on the other side of the Roman border), and, moreover, the poem is no proof that the poet really was in the habit of taking more than was good for him. “The ‘Bacco in Toscana,’” says Leigh Hunt, “was the first poem of its kind, and when a trifle is original even a trifle becomes worth something. . . . That the nature of the subject is partly a cause for its popularity, and that, for the same reason, it is impossible to convey a proper Italian sense of it to an Englishman is equally certain. But I hope it is not impossible to impart something of its spirit and vivacity. At all events, there is a novelty in it; the wine has a tune in the pouring out; and it is hard if some of the verses do not haunt a good-humoured reader, like a new air brought from the South. . . . It is observable that among the friends of our author were Carlo Dati, Francini, and Antonio Malatesti, three of Milton’s acquaintances when he was in Italy. Redi was only twelve years of age when Milton visited his country; but he may have seen him, and surely heard of him. It is pleasant to trace any kind of link between eminent men. There is reason to believe that our author was well known in England. Magalotti, who travelled there with Cosmo, and who afterwards translated Phillips’s *Cyder*, was one of his particular friends; and I cannot help thinking, from the irregularity of numbers in Dryden’s nobler dithyrambic, as well as from another poem of his (‘Dialogue of a Scholar and his Mistress’), that the ‘Bacco in Toscana’ had been seen by that great writer. Nothing is more likely; for, besides the connection between Cosmo and Charles II., James II. made a special request by his ambassador, Sir William Trumbull, to have

the poem sent him. When Spence was in Italy, many years afterwards, the name of Redi was still in great repute, both for his humorous poetry and his serious, though the wits had begun to find out that his real talent lay only in the former. Crudeli, a poet of that time, still in repute, told Spence that 'Redi's "Bacco in Toscana" was as lively and excellent as his sonnets were low and tasteless.' And, after all, what is this 'Bacco in Toscana'? It is an original, an effusion of animal spirits, a piece of Bacchanalian music. This is all; but this will not be regarded as nothing by those who know the value of originality, and who are thankful for any addition to our pleasures. . . . I wish that, by any process not interfering with the spirit of my original, I could make up to the English reader for the absence of that particular interest in a poem of this kind which arises from its being national. But this is impossible; and if he has neither a great understanding, nor a good nature that supplies the want of it; if he is deficient in animal spirits, or does not value a supply of them; and, above all, if he has no ear for a dancing measure, and no laughing welcome for a sudden turn or two at the end of a passage—our author's triumph over his cups will fall on his ear like 'a jest unprofitable.' I confess I have both enough melancholy and merriment in me to be at no time proof against a passage like—

'Non fia già che il Cioccolatte  
V'adopprassi, ovvero il Tè'—etc.

A great deal of the effect of poems of this kind consists in their hovering between jest and earnest. . . . The 'Bacco in Toscana' partakes more or less of the mock-heroic throughout, except in the very gravest lines of the author's personal panegyrics. It is to the Ode and the Dithyrambic what the 'Rape of the Lock' is to the Epic, with all the inferiority which such a distinction implies. . . . The great fault of the poem is undoubtedly what his friend Ménage objected to in it—namely, that Bacchus has all the talk to himself, and Ariadne becomes a puppet by his side. Redi, partly in answer to this objection, and partly, perhaps, out of a certain medical conscience (for it must not be forgotten that his vinosity is purely poetical, and that he was always insisting to his patients on the necessity of temperance and dilutions), projected a sort of counter-dithyrambic in praise of water, in which all the talk was to be confined to Ariadne. . . . He wrote but a paragraph of this *hydrambic*. The inspiration was not the same. As to his drinking so little wine and yet writing so well upon it, it is a triumph for Bacchus instead of a dishonour. It only shows how little wine will suffice to set a genial brain in motion. A poet has wine in his blood. The laurel and ivy were common, of old, both to Bacchus and Apollo; at least Apollo shared the ivy always, and Bacchus wore laurel when he was young and innocent,

'What time he played about the nestling woods,  
Heaping his head with ivy and with bay.'"

(Page 45.)



GIOVANNI SABADINO DEGLI ARIENTI, a Bolognese, was the author of one of those collections of short stories so numerous in Italian literature, which often furnished subjects to our Elizabethan playwrights. The dates of his birth and death are uncertain, but the former must have been before 1450, and the latter not earlier than 1506. Besides the *Porrettane* (so called because the stories are supposed to be told by a holiday party at the baths of Porretta), he wrote poems, treatises, and biographies. (*Page 19.*)

FRANCO SACCHIETTI was a Florentine, about contemporary with Chaucer, being born in 1335. He was brought up to a commercial life, but afterwards devoted himself to literature, and took a considerable part in politics, being sent on various embassies by the Florentine Republic. On one of them he was plundered at sea by the Pisan war-ships; and, at a later date, the property he possessed near Florence was laid waste in the war with Gian Galeazzo Visconti. The date of his death is uncertain, but it probably took place during the first few years of the fifteenth century. He wrote sonnets, *canzoni*, madrigals, and other poems; but his best known works are his *Novelle* or short stories. They were originally 300 in number, but we only possess 258, the remainder having been lost. They are not fitted into any framework, like that of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The best of them are of a humorous character; and the style is more simple and colloquial than Boccaccio's. The story given as a specimen probably exists (under one form or another) in the folk-tales of every European nation. We possess it in the ballad of "King John and the Abbot of Canterbury." (*Page 10.*)

ALESSANDRO TASSONI was born at Modena in 1565, and died there in 1635, after many intermediate changes of abode. He belonged to a noble family, but was early left an orphan, and his very moderate patrimony was further diminished by law-suits, and by the dishonesty of his guardians. The greater part of his life was spent at court; he began his career by entering the service of Cardinal Ascanio Colonna at Rome, and ended it at the Ducal Court of Modena. He was, like so many Italians of that period, a skilled politician as well as a finished scholar, and was entrusted with various diplomatic missions. His principal works belong to the departments of reflective philosophy and literary criticism, and he was engaged in an acrimonious controversy wherein the chief bones of contention were the poetry of Petrarch and the philosophy of Aristotle, both which idols of the age he attacked unsparingly; but he is best known to posterity by his heroico-comic poem of "La Secchia Rapita" (The Stolen Bucket), said to have been written in 1611. It is based on the tradition that, during a war between Modena and Bologna, the Modenese forces (in 1325) carried off a wooden bucket from a public well in the hostile city. The trophy was hung up in the Cathedral at Modena, and remained there as a witness to the truth of the story—which,



as a matter of history, is somewhat doubtful, though none the worse on that account, as the groundwork to Tassoni's poem. Many contemporaries of the author's are introduced under fictitious names; and, no doubt, the personal element (which is not the exclusive property of the New Journalism) contributed largely to the success of the work on its first appearance. But apart from this, it is genuine burlesque, and good of its kind, the absurdity being heightened by the introduction of the deities of Olympus in comically modern guise, to represent (and parody) the "machinery" which was considered an indispensable ingredient in a serious epic poem—the "machinery" which, to a certain extent, spoils the *Jerusalem* and the *Lusiad*. The passage describing the assembly of the gods in order to deliberate on the fortunes of Modena and Bologna, has been chosen for quotation. The translation is by James Atkinson, and was published in two volumes (London, 1825). After describing "the rape of the bucket" by the Modenese, the poem goes on to narrate how the Bolognese tried to recover it, and challenged the Modenese to a war of extermination. The latter, though seeing their danger, made no efforts to put their city in a state of defence by repairing the ruined fortifications; but contented themselves with appealing to the Emperor for help, and making alliances with Parma and Cremona. Fame having carried the report of what had occurred to Olympus, the Homeric gods assembled in council (as already mentioned), with the result that Minerva and Apollo declared for Bologna, as being a city given to arts and learning. Bacchus and Venus took the part of the merry and pleasure-loving town of Modena—Mars taking the same side for the love of Venus. These incite the various terrestrial potentates to take sides in the feud—in which, at length, the Pope himself interferes. In conclusion, the bucket is left in possession of the Modenese, while the citizens of Bologna keep Enzo, King of Sardinia—son of the German Emperor—who, in fact, ended his days in captivity there. The poem was defined by Tassoni himself as "a monstrous caprice," intended to make game of modern poets; and it is impossible to give a concise summary of it, more especially as he wove into it all the burlesque adventures which occurred to him, whether real or fictitious. Tassoni was, according to an Italian writer, "of a lively and grotesque fancy, of a cheerful disposition, and fond of jesting, insomuch that he could not refrain from jokes even in his will." Moreover, he was "averse from the prejudices of literary men, and a lover of novelty"—for which reason he advanced the monstrous proposition that Petrarch's *Rime* were not the sole standard of poetry for all ages and all countries. (*Page 39.*)

ACHILLE TORELLI, dramatic author, born at Naples, 1844, is said to be of Albanian descent. His first success was the comedy, *After Death*, written at the age of seventeen, and acted at Naples and then at Turin. This was succeeded by several comedies, most of which were successful. *La Verità*, from which the scene given in

this volume is extracted, was acted at Naples, Milan, and Turin in 1865. Torelli volunteered for the Italian army in the campaign of 1866, and was laid up for several months in consequence of a fall from his horse at Custozza. Since then he has produced a long list of plays, both tragedies and comedies, of which perhaps the best is *Triste Realtà* (1871), which won the applause of the veteran Manzoni. Angelo de Gubernatis (in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Scrittori Contemporanei*, whence the main facts of this notice are gathered) considers *I Mariti* Torelli's masterpiece. The play is a good one, but has about as much right to be called a comedy as George Eliot's *Jane's Repentance*. He leads a very retired life, seeing only a few friends, and spends most of his time in study and writing. (Page 262.)

GIORGIO VASARI, born at Arezzo, 1512. Studied drawing under Michelangelo, Andrea del Sarto, and others. Between 1527 and 1529, driven by necessity, and having several relations in need of help, he worked as a goldsmith at Florence, but afterwards returned to painting. Like Ruskin in our own day, however, he was rather a writer on art than an artist. He was the author of several works on painting and architecture, of an autobiography, and, above all, of the celebrated *Lives of Famous Painters*. The anecdotes quoted in this volume were traditionally current in Vasari's time, and had already been recorded by Franco Sacchetti. The translation quoted is from *Stories of the Italian Artists*, by the author of *Belt and Spur* (Seeley & Co., 1884). (Page 21.)

GIOVANNI VERGA, born at Catania, Sicily, in 1840. He wrote *Storia d'una Capinera*, *Eva*, *Nedda*, *Eros*, *Tigre Reale*, *Primavera*. He has also written two masterly collections of stories and sketches from Sicilian life, entitled, *Vita dei Campi*, and *Novelle Rusticane*, and a continued story, *I Malavoglia*, which has recently been translated under the title, *The House of the Medlar*. A Neapolitan journal describes him as "thin and pale . . . with iron-grey hair and moustache. His lips are thin, chin somewhat too long, the mouth retreating, the nose straight, the forehead spacious. He is not handsome, but has a noble face, a little like that of Dante. His appearance is that of a man of cold temperament. Some of his speeches—some pages in his books—are those of a sceptic. As to the coldness, I do not know whether it would be correct to apply the old image of Etna—the fire under the snow. But as to the scepticism, I would take my oath that—contrary to generally received opinion—it is only apparent. Verga is not an effusive man—certainly not. But he feels, and he respects—rather, he venerates feeling even under its most formal manifestations. I met him at a time when he had recently lost, first, a sister, and then his mother. His grief was severe and restrained, but deeply felt and lasting. He is not by any means a sentimental man. Sentimentalism in others always contracts his lips in that fleeting, ironical smile which has

given him the name of a sceptic. . . . He is a slow worker. He observes at his leisure, reflects for a long time, and then retires into the quiet of his own home to work; but he works not with the fire of inspiration, but with the sure hand of an artist who has his picture clearly traced in his mind." Verga's most successfully-drawn characters are taken from the peasantry. Jeli, the horse-herd; Rosso Malpelo, the red-haired waif who had never had any one to care for him save the father who was buried in the sand-pits; poor Lucia in *Pane Nero*, slowly driven to throw herself away by sheer dread of starvation; La Santa, bewitched by the love of Gramigna the brigand,—these, and many more, are living, breathing figures. But Verga, according to the critic above quoted, "is ambitious of attaining a perfect knowledge of 'high life,' and describing it truthfully. But in this he is not always successful. If he draws from life, he certainly does not choose the best models." Certainly "*Il Come, il Quando, e il Perchè*," is not a happy effort, and "*Jeli il Pastore*" is worth a dozen of it. (*Page 137.*)